



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA

**EUCCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION
AT «CAMPAL GROUNDS» OF GOA**

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Thursday, 6 February 1986

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. I am particularly pleased to be here in Goa, this historic centre from which Saint Francis Xavier and his companions proclaimed the Gospel. With affection in our Lord Jesus Christ, I greet the people of this local Church and all those who have come from the Dioceses of Karwar and Belgaum. Today we join our minds and hearts in prayer as we offer praise and worship to the Most Holy Trinity. We have come here to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, the summit and centre of the life of the Church, the memorial of the Cross and Resurrection of our Saviour, the Bread of Life and the Cup of eternal Salvation. At this Eucharist, we are directing our attention particularly to the mystery of the unity of the Church, to the Lord's call to unity.

On the eve of his Passion, at the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus prayed for unity among all who would believe in him. He said: " I do not pray for these only ", having in mind here the Apostles, "but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us" .

We unite ourselves with this prayer of Christ, the one Priest of the New and everlasting Covenant. Christ the Priest offers himself in sacrifice; he offers his Body and Blood, his life and death. And by this most sacred Sacrifice, he reconciles the world to himself, he dies on the Cross "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" . The words of Christ's priestly prayer come from the very heart of this Sacrifice. His prayer and his sacrificial death are for the same purpose:

"that they may all be one".

2. What unity does Christ mean? He means the unity that comes from Baptism. Saint Paul speaks of it in his Letter to the Galatians where he writes: "For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" .

Through Baptism we are immersed not only in water but primarily in the redeeming death of Christ. And just as Christ's death was the beginning of his new life, revealed through the Resurrection, so also for us the sacramental immersion in the waters of Baptism is the beginning of a new life: life through grace, the same life that was revealed in the Resurrection of Christ. It is the life of Christ given to us by the Father in the Holy Spirit.

This life is one and unique. It is present in all those who receive Baptism. And therefore all the baptised make up a unity in Christ. Baptism signifies and brings about the fundamental vocation of all Christians to be one. At the same time it is a calling to union in the one Body of the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. The unity which binds Christians as one is the unity which is from God. The supreme model of this unity is the Blessed Trinity, the Communion of the Three Divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus prayed at the Last Supper: "Even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in Us" .

All those who through the same faith and the same Baptism become children of God are called to this union. "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God, through faith" , says the Apostle Paul. So, being through faith children of God in him who is the only-begotten Son of the Father, we must be united in this supreme source of unity, of divine unity of the Son with the Father.

The Father and the Son have poured forth the Holy Spirit upon the Church. The Spirit dwells in the hearts of all the baptised, prompting them to pray with confidence and to call God: "Abba, Father". And, as the Second Vatican Council taught: "It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe, pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that marvellous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity. By distributing various kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries , he enriches the Church of Jesus Christ with different functions "in order to perfect the saints for a work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ"" .

4. In the unity that comes from faith and Baptism, there is also contained a particular refection of the glory of God, the glory that the Father eternally gives to the Son, the glory that he gave to the Son on earth, particularly when he was lifted up on the Cross. The aspiration for unity, then, is permeated by the call to share in this glory. Thus Jesus prayed to the Father in these words: "The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one" .

And what glory did the Father give to the Son? The glory of humble service to others, the glory of doing the Father's will in all things, the glory which culminated in his freely accepted death on the Cross, his Sacrifice for the Redemption of the whole world. This is the glory of Christ. This remains the path to glory for all the disciples of Christ. The best way to glorify God is to follow the example of Jesus who said: if any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" . Whoever glorifies God in this way will share in the unity of God and be one with him as the Father and Son are one.

5. Unity is a gift of the one God in Three Divine Persons. Where this gift is received in faith there are found the fruits of the Holy Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" . Moreover, God helps us to overcome divisions and to recover and achieve unity. He gives us the light of truth and the grace necessary for a change of heart. He frees us from ignorance, error and sin, from all that causes divisions within ourselves and in our relationships with others. The Holy Spirit is near to the heart and mind of those who pray to him. He offers us the fullness of communion with God himself and blesses us with reconciliation with our brothers and sisters.

Although unity is a gift which we human beings could never achieve on our own, nonetheless we have a duty to seek it and to work for it. It is an essential characteristic of the Church which is always "one, holy, Catholic and apostolic", as we profess in the Creed. But while the Church is one, there is disunity among Christians. And the task of restoring unity among all who believe in Christ becomes ever more urgent. The past and present divisions are a scandal to non-Christians, a glaring contradiction of the will of Christ, a serious obstacle to the Church's efforts to proclaim the Gospel.

6. The work of ecumenism demands our constant efforts and fervent prayers. It begins with the recognition of that primary unity which already exists because of Baptism, a unity which truly binds the baptised to one another and gives them a common share in the life of the Most Holy Trinity, a unity that perpetually persists notwithstanding whatever differences or divisions have arisen. The words of Saint Paul remain forever true: "For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" .

But we must be eager to work for the fullness of unity among the followers of Christ, here in India and throughout the world. We rejoice to see the ecumenical progress which has already been achieved: the overcoming of longstanding prejudices, false judgements and disparaging expression; the great growth in reciprocal understanding and fraternal respect; the significant progress in dialogue and in collaboration in the service of humanity, and the increasing opportunities for common prayer which respects the different traditions. Let us continue on the path to full unity, looking forward in hope to the day when we shall be truly one just as the Father and Son are one.

7. In a certain sense, the unity of Christ's disciples is a condition for fulfilling the mission of the Church; not only that, it is a condition for fulfilling the mission of Christ himself in the world. It is a condition for effectively proclaiming and consolidating faith in Christ. Thus Jesus prayed: "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me... that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" .

The unity of Christians is vital for the proclamation of the Gospel. For evangelization depends on the convincing witness of the Christian community and not only on the words which are preached. How can non-believers come to believe in the love of God revealed in Christ if they do not "see how these Christians love one another"? Love cannot reveal itself or enter into hearts except through the testimony of unity. The very longing for unity and union constitutes the beginning of this testimony.

8. The gift of unity which the Church has received from God gives her a special responsibility in the human family: namely, to promote dialogue and understanding among all, to work for unity and peace in our divided world.

Conflicts and tensions abound today. Nations are divided between East and West, North and South, friend and enemy. And within the borders of every country, within the borders of India too, can be found opposing groups and factions, rivalries arising from prejudice and ideologies, from historical stereotypes and ethnic barriers and from a variety of other factors, none of which are worthy of our human dignity.

It is in this divided world that the Church is sent forth today to promote harmony and peace. In charity and truth she goes forth: in that charity which sees every person as a child of God, as a brother or sister of equal dignity, regardless of his or her social status, regardless of his or her race or religion; and in the truth which overcomes the slavery of falsehood and brings new freedom to mind and heart.

Above all, as Christians we must go forth with faith in the power of the Cross to overcome the threat of sin and to reconcile the world to God. As I stated in my 1986 World Day of Peace message, "Christians, enlightened by faith, know that the ultimate reason why the world is the scene of divisions, tensions, rivalries, blocs and unjust inequalities, instead of being a place of genuine fraternity, is sin, that is to say human moral disorder. But Christians also know that the grace of Christ, which can transform this human condition, is continually being offered to the world, since 'where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' ".

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Jesus calls us to be one as he and the Father are one. In our union with Jesus and in the ecclesial communion of the Church, we find the strength and inspiration to overcome all barriers and divisions, and to forge new and closer bonds of unity: unity

in families and in parishes, unity in local Churches and between rites, unity throughout the whole Church in India, in the communion of the universal Church and with the Bishop of Rome. The world awaits the ever more fervent witness of our faith and love. "Let all Christ's faithful", in the words of the Second Vatican Council, "remember that the more purely they strive to live according to the Gospel, the more they are fostering and even practising Christian unity". Let us, dearly beloved, be one in the unity of Christ Jesus and his Church. Amen.

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