



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,

SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND **ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**

TO THE KOREAN INTELLECTUALS AND ARTISTS *Sogang Catholic University Auditorium (Korea)*

Saturday, 5 May 1984 Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends, it is with great pleasure that I come to meet you this evening. As prominent educators, scientists, artists, writers and lawyers, you are in the forefront of man's worthy efforts to understand and fulfill himself in an ever broadening horizon of new knowledge, new form, and new vision. You have the noble and difficult mission both of handing on the best of man's achievements and also of pioneering new frontiers of culture. Be assured that *the Church highly esteems your vocation and mission*.¹ We are all aware that man can only be truly man through his culture, through his freedom to grow integrally and with all his specific capabilities. And man who rightly seeks such growth is also endowed with supreme dignity and freedom, as befits a being created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ. That is why as Christians you are called to an even higher mission *to evangelize human culture* itself. And I am truly heartened to learn that there are so many Catholic lay men and women in every field of cultural endeavor in Korea. Yours is indeed a difficult task but a splendid one. This is your apostolate. The Second Vatican Council gave new impetus to *the dialogue between faith and culture*. For it had become evident that a dramatic distance threatened to develop between the Church and the various cultural movements developing around the world. While the modern world was fascinated with its own conquests and achievements in science and technology, it has at times lost its bearings and given credence to ideologies and ethical criteria out of harmony with the Gospel. That is why the Council wished to commit the whole Church *to listening to modern man* in order to understand him, and to looking for a new form of dialogue that would enable the originality of the Gospel message to penetrate contemporary minds and hearts. Acutely aware of the vital importance of this task, I for my part have long been keenly interested in the dialogue between the Church and the world of culture. Early last year I instituted a Pontifical Council for Culture, eliciting the collaboration of eminent men and women in all pertinent fields. I am firmly convinced that this dialogue between the Church and culture is of great importance for *the future of mankind*.² There are two main and complementary aspects of the question that correspond to the two dimensions in which the Church acts. One is the dimension of *the evangelization of cultures* and the other is that of the *defence of man and his cultural advancement*. The Church must become all things to all peoples. There is a long and *important process of inculturation* ahead of us in order that the Gospel may penetrate the very soul of living cultures. By promoting this process, the Church responds to peoples' deep aspirations and helps them come to the sphere of faith itself. This *the first Christians of Korea*, your ancestors, saw very clearly. Having come to know Christ through an earnest quest for the fullness of humanity, they then made exemplary efforts to incarnate the Gospel into the thought patterns and affective climate of the people. Following the example of his willingness to adopt an attitude of exchange and of understanding with the cultural identity of the people, we must now also work to bring various cultures themselves closer together. And this we must do in order that single cultures may then more fully enrich others,

and so that universal values may become the heritage of all. In this regard your role as bridgebuilders between cultures is of vital importance. But your contribution will be the more valid the deeper you are rooted in your own identity as Koreans, and the more you are also conscious of bringing the saving word of the Gospel into this dialogue. For we believe that the Gospel must penetrate, uplift and purify all cultures. But, of course, the enrichment works the other way too. The age-old experience of so many peoples, the progress of science and technology, the evolution of social institutions, the unfolding of the arts: these are all ways in which *the nature of man becomes more fully revealed*. They open up new avenues towards truth and deepen for us the understanding of God's mysteries. Advances in the cosmic sciences, life sciences, communications, medicine, mass-education, psychology, means of production, electronic data processing - all this can help bring about a deeper appreciation of man. Indeed, these splendid achievements of the human race are a sign of God's greatness and the flowering of his own mysterious design. Through them a door is opened on God's creation, and on the meaning of his gift of redemption. In this context we can see so clearly how dangerous is any dichotomy between the Gospel and authentic cultures. We all do well to recall those important words of Paul VI: "The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times" (Pauli VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20).³ We should justly welcome and admire the God-given power and beauty of man at work. Yet precisely because the power that he wields is so very great, man is also in great need of a lucid sense of discernment. This power produces wonders; it can also destroy the one who uses it unwisely. That is why we can never, never forget that *the Gospel impels us to love man in himself, for his own sake*, as the living image of God himself. God's mercy and love, revealed to us in his Son made man for us, impels us to proclaim that man merits respect, honor, and love for his own sake, and that he must be valued in his full dignity. No man may ever be made into a tool; contempt and abuse of one single man is contempt and abuse for the Creator himself. Because he lacks authentic "wisdom" in the use of his capabilities, *man is threatened* in his biological existence by irreparable pollution, by genetic manipulation, by the suppression of unborn life. His moral being can be made the prey of nihilistic hedonism, indiscriminate consumerism, and the erosion of a sense of values. And in our day, on a scale hitherto unknown, unjust economic systems exploit whole populations, political and ideological policies victimize the very soul of entire peoples, with the result that they are forced into uniform apathy or an attitude of total distrust of others.⁴ As Christians we cannot remain silent in the face of so many threats to man's dignity, to peace, to genuine progress. Our faith obliges us *to resist* whatever prevents individuals, groups and entire peoples from being their true selves according to their deeper calling. Our Christian faith obliges us above all to go beyond mere condemnation: it leads us to build, to love! I made a point of proclaiming before all the nations assembled at UNESCO what I wish now to repeat to you because of its relevance: "Man must *be affirmed for himself*, and not for any other motive or reason: solely for himself! What is more, man must be loved because he is man; love must be claimed for man by reason of the particular dignity he possesses. The body of the affirmations concerning man belongs to the very substance of Christ's message and of the mission of the Church . . ." (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Allocutio ad eos qui conventui consilii ab executione internationalis organismi compendiariis litteris Unesco nuncupati affuere habita*, 10, die 2 iunii 1980: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, III/1 [1980] 1643). Similarly, in concluding the Encyclical "*Redemptor Hominis*", I wrote that "man is and always becomes the 'way' of the Church's daily life" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 21). Yes, man is "the way of the Church", for without this loving respect for man and for his dignity, how could anyone proclaim the words of truth and life?⁵ Yours, then, is a twofold mission: to evangelize culture and to defend man. *The Gospel itself is a leaven of culture* to the extent that it meets man in his ways of thinking, behaving, working, resting, that is, in his cultural dimension. On the other hand, *your faith will give you confidence in man*, created in God's image and redeemed by Christ, whom you will defend and love for his own sake. And because your faith includes a profound realization of man's limitations and of his sinfulness, you will face the challenge of

evangelizing culture with realism and the necessary compassion. In a word, you are called to *help the Church become a creator of culture* in her relation to the modern world. It is indeed a great mission, specifically entrusted to you as men and women of culture, by which you are to bear witness before the world to the Good News of the Gospel. I am not unaware of the peculiar challenges in this regard facing you in *today's Korea*. As you educate the young, pursue and transmit scientific knowledge, create works of art that express the soul of the times, write words of man about man, seek relations among people - you are being offered both a responsibility and an opportunity: indeed, you have a very great vocation and calling. And this at a moment in your history when the heritage of the past is being questioned and even unjustly repudiated, when unassimilated new currents are creating confusion, when differences between the generations are becoming acute, when the social and political climate sometimes impedes a clear ethical view of realities, when private interests and personal well-being become a paramount imperative, and when accepted norms and values sometimes seem to be empty forms. But the more arduous the task, the more urgent and worthwhile it is *to take up this challenge*, so that all may live in the Risen Lord. And yes, yours is a resilient people, full of vitality, optimism, creativeness, character and heart - a people that has always shown a deep religious character and profound humanity. I am confident that you will continue to be a people of high culture, open to God and open to all of mankind! At the summit of all your wisdom is *the great revelation* of God: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us". And may Jesus Christ, this Word made flesh, guide you in your work! May the Blessed Mother who bore the Word, *the Wisdom of God*, be close to you today and always. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana