



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

POPE JOHN PAUL II

TO THE NATIONAL DELEGATION FOR INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESSES

Friday, 11 March 1988

Dear Cardinal Rossi and Cardinal Kim

Venerable Brothers and Dear Friends,

1. I am pleased to welcome you all, especially the National Delegates for International Eucharistic Congresses. You have gathered in Rome from many different parts of the world for a meeting with the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses and with members of the Host Committee of the 44th International Eucharistic Congress which is to be held in Seoul, Korea, from 5 to 8 October 1989. The purpose of your meeting is to determine ways to promote the pastoral preparation for this major ecclesial event in all the local Churches.

The International Eucharistic Congress of Seoul will, in fact, be a very important occasion – a “Statio Orbis” – for the entire Catholic Church, both because of the significant celebrations and expressions of Eucharistic devotion to take place at the Congress, and by reason of the spiritual participation in the Congress of the local Churches around the world.

2. The theme of the Congress is *Christus pax nostra*. Such a theme is filled with significance not only for the Church in Korea, the host nation, but for the Church in every continent and indeed for all believers. The profound aspiration to peace which fills the hearts of all men and women of religious faith was clearly and strikingly manifested in the meeting of prayer for peace held at Assisi on 27 October 1986. That assembly also heard the proclamation that “peace bears the name of Jesus Christ”.

It is altogether appropriate therefore that there be intense spiritual preparation through reflection and prayer for the forthcoming Congress, with a sincere opening of hearts and minds to welcome

the gift of Christ's peace.

I wish to take the occasion of our meeting today in order to contribute to that preparation, offering some consideration on which the individual faithful and the ecclesial communities might usefully reflect.

3. For Christians, Jesus Christ is the sole source of genuine peace. There can be no hope of true peace in the world apart from Christ. Jesus himself made this clear when, during the Last Supper, he said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you". The peace which he gives is not superficial. Rather, it reaches to the very depths of the human heart. For this reason Christ immediately adds: "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid". His peace brings serenity; it produces that inner peace of soul which should shine forth in all human behaviour.

How does Christ ensure this peace? He has merited it by his sacrifice. He gave his life to bring about reconciliation between God and man. While hostility characterized the attitude of the sinner towards God, the Saviour has freed us from the slavery of sin and has restored a profound harmony between our consciences and the will of the Father.

Furthermore, through this same sacrifice he has achieved a reconciliation of human beings among themselves. According to Saint John, Jesus had to die "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad". Saint Paul underlines this truth even more forcefully when he affirms that by reconciling man with God, Christ has reconciled people among themselves: he has abolished hatred and enmity, and has reunited the whole of humanity in "one new man". Thus it is by establishing a more perfect unity that "he is our peace". He has in fact made "peace by the blood of his cross".

4. The sacrifice which draws the human family into unity is made present in the Eucharist. And so, every Eucharistic celebration is the source of a new gift of peace. In particular, when Christ gives himself as food and drink in Eucharistic Communion he communicates his very own love, and enables his followers to love one another as he himself has loved them. Consequently, by virtue of this love, he enables them to attain a fully genuine peace. Christ's giving of himself is more powerful than all the forces of division that oppress the world.

Some aspects of the peace that flows from the Eucharist are worthy of special note in the context of next year's Congress.

Our first consideration is that, as a result of Christ's life penetrating the soul, there arises a peace which extends to all aspects of the person's life and inmost dispositions. Thanks to the individual's growing acceptance of the divine will, there is established a peace that overcomes all anxieties and fears.

Subsequently this peace extends to social relations. Renewing and nourishing the unity of the Church, the Eucharist sustains peace and understanding, as well as the spirit of collaboration, among all the members of the Christian community. It is not in vain that in every Eucharistic celebration a prayer is addressed to Christ for the unity and peace of the Church. By means of the boundless love which he communicates to human hearts, Christ in the Eucharist urges the faithful to foster warm and constructive relationships with everyone, and to work untiringly for the spread of peace throughout the world. The love which the Eucharist nourishes in human heart impels Christians to work for peace in society. Whoever lives by this love is convinced that conflicts can be resolved and social justice can prevail.

Finally, this same love contributes to bringing nations close to one another by strengthening the resolve to preserve peace, the willingness to make just concessions and the desire for greater understanding and harmony among all the peoples of the earth.

5. Christians are called upon to believe firmly in the peace-giving and unifying power of the Eucharist. The Eucharist makes it ever more possible to realize on a wider scale the beatitude proclaimed by Jesus: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God". In the Eucharist the children of the Father receive the life of Christ, which is none other than the life of the Father himself, the life of love which leads them to spread peace, for their own happiness and that of all those to whom this divine gift is destined.

In this perspective we can well understand how a Eucharistic Congress ought also to give rise to new ecumenical initiatives and endeavours. To speak of divided Christian is to refer to a contradiction, for the Christian is Christ's disciple and Christ died "to gather into one the children of God". The preparation of an International Eucharistic Congress can be, therefore, a time to bear witness, in union with our Christian brothers and sisters, to our common faith in Christ, the one Saviour and Bearer of Peace.

6. Further reflection on the theme "Christ Our Peace" should increase knowledge and appreciation – also by means of Eucharistic Adoration – of the central place which the Eucharist occupies in the Church.

Hence the great ecclesial event that is the 44th International Eucharistic Congress in Seoul should involve every particular Church, every parish, every religious community and every ecclesial movement. All should feel called to take part in the Congress by means of a more intense catechesis on the Eucharist, a more knowledgeable and active participation in the Eucharistic Liturgy, and a sense of adoration capable of interiorizing the celebration of the Paschal Mystery with a prayer that transforms the whole of life into an offering for the life of the world, after the example of Christ.

In concluding this meeting, I wish to thank the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic

Congresses and the members of the Committee of Seoul who have joined in the careful preparation of this gathering of National Delegates. I likewise send my wholehearted encouragement to the National Delegates who have not been able to come to Rome, as well as to your collaborators everywhere, especially in Korea and throughout Asia. Past experience of International Eucharistic Congresses teaches that the attention and involvement of the local Churches depends in good part on the commitment of the National Delegates and their collaborators.

I invite the entire Church to pray for the success of the 44th International Eucharistic Congress. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, inspire and enlighten us all so that, as a result of this "Statio Orbis" in Seoul in 1989, the essential significance of the Eucharist for unity and peace in the world will be better understood.

To all of you present and to all who in the local Churches are engaged in preparing the Congress I gladly impart my special Apostolic Blessing.

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