



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATORS OF DÍLI AND BAUCAU
ON THEIR AD LIMINA VISIT**

Monday, 28 October 2002

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1,2). With these words I welcome you today to the *See of Peter*. I am particularly happy to be able to exchange the holy kiss with the Sister Churches of Díli and Baucau who, in a certain way "have come through the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb", inspired by the certainty that he "will be their shepherd and will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Apoc 7,14.17).

I thank God for the generous way in which the Churches of Timor have lived solidarity with their fellow-citizens, becoming their moral support in the hour of trial. Once again, I wish to entrust to the divine mercy the victims of the violence, and express my profound solidarity with all who are suffering the consequences of the tragedy that has befallen your people. I warmly thank the priests and religious, the catechists and all the faithful of Timor for their courage and fidelity to Christ and to the Church. When you return bring to them the Pope's affectionate greeting and the assurance of his prayers that they may continue to be tireless witnesses of God's love among their brethren.

Likewise, please convey to all your compatriots my fervent wishes for the great success of a fraternal and prosperous nation.

2. At the start of the third millennium, the family of nations has been able to celebrate the birth of the Democratic Republic of Timor. The people and its leaders are determined to rebuild the

country destroyed by hatred and the failure of others to understand a choice, that of being Timorese, and, for the majority, Timorese Catholics.

For centuries, their religion, an integral part of every people's culture, has sublimated the superstitious fear of popular beliefs with *timor Dei*, fear of God, but of a God of hope, sensitive to the desire for a future and to the power of prayer. Indeed, when insecurity forced the Timorese to escape to the mountains, they could bring nothing with them; yet they had with them the crucifix or an image of Our Lady of Fatima from their family oratories. Praised be God who, in his goodness and providence has granted us to see the return of freedom and peace to your land, enabling you to dedicate all your energy to serving a promising harvest.

Do all in your power to help your ecclesial communities to resume the normal pattern of their lives and Christian witness. They will be called, here and there, like the father of the prodigal son (cf. Lk 15,11-32), to offer a reconciling embrace to their brothers and sisters who, confident of finding fraternal forgiveness, will return to the "home of communion" (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 43). Perhaps disappointed, coerced, or persuaded ... they may have sown mourning and left children orphaned. They probably did not realize that in killing another person, they were killing themselves. Now they knock at the door of the Church, whose "one ambition is to continue [Christ's] mission of service and love, so that all ... "may have life and have it abundantly" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 50).

The memory of that appalling tragedy will not fail to raise the question: How could such cruel and irrational violence have been unleashed? If one excludes those who gave their own lives in forgiveness, will anyone be able to consider himself fully immune from the contagion of that homicidal violence? In this regard, Jesus' words: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (Jn 8,7) resound in the people directly concerned and give rise to an examination of conscience and a follow-up resolution, in other words, a "purification of memory". This act of purification could prove useful for your ecclesial communities, as was the case during the Holy Year, when it "strengthened our steps for the journey towards the future and ... made us more humble and vigilant in our acceptance of the Gospel" in our faith (cf. Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 6).

3. Believing in Jesus means believing that love is present in the world and that this love is stronger than all the kinds of evil in which man, humanity and the world are involved. For this reason, "to bear witness to Jesus Christ is the supreme service which the Church can offer to the peoples of Asia, for it responds to their profound longing for the Absolute, and it unveils the truths and values which will ensure their integral human development" (Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 20).

To enable the faithful, young and adults, an ever-clearer rediscovery of their own vocation and a greater readiness to fulfill their mission, it is necessary for them to have a complete catechesis on

the truths of the faith and their concrete applications in life, to ensure that they may encounter Jesus Christ, converse with him, let themselves be inspired by his love and set on fire by the desire to make him known and loved by all. This formation, given and received in the Church, will bring forth solid, missionary Christian communities for "a fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire" (*ibid.*, n. 23).

The ones who make this catechetical proposal are the entire Christian community in all its variety of members. However, if parents are to pass on to their children what they themselves received, the educational action of families is fundamental. If family life is based on love, simplicity, concrete commitment and daily witness, its essential values will be protected from the disintegration which, all too often in our day, threatens this primordial institution of society and the Church. Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, continue, in season and out of season, to make heard the "appeal" launched by the Fathers of the Synod for Asia, who called upon "the faithful in their countries where the demographic question is often used as an argument for the need to introduce abortion and artificial population control programmes, to resist the "culture of death" (*ibid.*, n. 35). The Church defends and promotes life, against the pessimism and selfishness that darken the world.

4. Ecclesial experience teaches that "only from within and through the culture does the Christian faith become a part of history and the creator of history.... For this reason the Church calls upon the lay faithful to be present, as signs of courage and intellectual creativity, in the privileged places of culture, that is, the world of education - school and university - in places of scientific and technological research, the areas of artistic creativity and work in the humanities" (Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, n. 44). The presence of lay people is of the greatest importance during this stage when national life is being restored in East Timor, which expects a great deal from the competence and experience of the Church, and especially through her educational institutions, for the satisfactory training of the future socio-economic and political leaders and shapers of the country.

As I congratulate you on the praiseworthy work of the Catholic school in Timor, I recall that it is her duty to "be firmly resolved to take the new cultural situation in her stride and, by her refusal to accept unquestioningly educational projects which are merely partial, be an example and stimulus for other educational institutions, in the forefront of the ecclesial community's concern for education" (Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*; ORE, 22 April 1998, p. 9). In this way, the Catholic school provides a useful public service. Although it is definitely Catholic in its approach, it is not reserved exclusively for Catholics but is open to all who appreciate and desire to share in their excellent education.

5. The effectiveness of all this evangelizing action depends to a large extent on the spiritual tenor of your priests, "prudent cooperators of the episcopal order" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 28). If it is true that it is the task of bishops to be "heralds of the faith" and its "authentic teachers" (*ibid.*, n. 25) in the midst of the flock that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to them, only the continual action of their

priests can guarantee that every Christian community is nourished by the Word of God and sustained by the grace of the sacraments, especially, the Eucharist, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord who builds up the Church, and Reconciliation, which I recently discussed in the "Motu proprio" *Misericordia Dei*, urging a "vigorous revitalization" (p. 6) of this sacrament.

May priests be ever more the men of faith and prayer the world needs, "not just charity workers and institutional administrators, but men whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the Spirit" (Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 43). In conformity with their vocation as pastors, may they give priority to the spiritual service of the faithful entrusted to their care, to lead them to Jesus Christ whom they themselves represent, while remaining men of mission and of dialogue. I invite them to foster among themselves the spirit of priestly brotherhood and collaboration, for the fruitfulness of their common pastoral action.

6. Whether they are indigenous or foreign, men and women religious participate fully in the Church's mission of evangelization, and generously pay attention to the poorer and weaker members of society. In the name of the Church, I thank them for the generous witness of charity they bear by the total gift of themselves to God and to their brothers and sisters. The consecrated life contributes in a decisive way to establishing and developing the Church in Timor; I hope it will continue to be the object of your pastoral care, venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, and that you will continue to promote it, in its active and contemplative forms, safeguarding the special features of its service to the Kingdom of God.

I am happy to know that vocations to the priestly and religious life are increasing in your dioceses. I appreciate the care you give to them and your endeavours for the formation of the young who, following in the footsteps of Christ, desire to serve the Church. Please pass on to the young people who have answered the call of the Lord and to their families the Pope's gratitude for the generous gift they have made to Christ.

7. At the end of our visit, as we think of your noble country, I urge all its sons and daughters, in accord with each one's level of responsibility, to be firmly committed to building a society that is more fraternal and supportive, whose members have an equal share of the honours and burdens of the new nation. May God pour out on everyone his Spirit of love and peace.

May Christ's disciples turn to the Father of mercies in an attitude of deep conversion and intense prayer to ask him for the strength and courage, with all people of good will, to be tireless champions of dialogue and reconciliation. Tell your communities of the Pope's spiritual closeness to each of them and to the members who still live far from their homeland or do not yet have their own home. May this period offer the Church in Timor a new springtime of Christian life, and obtain for her the grace to respond courageously to the promptings of the Spirit.

To the Immaculate Virgin Mary I entrust your ministry and the life of your ecclesial communities, so

that she may guide their steps towards Christ Our Lord, while I gladly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing and extend it to the priests, men and women religious, catechists, and all the faithful of your Dioceses.