

84

CHRIST LIVES, CHRIST HAS RISEN

Sixth Sunday of Easter

30 April 1978

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

1 Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21

Dear sisters and brothers, the Easter season is coming to its end, and the end coincides with one of the most important manifestations of God among humans. In two weeks we will have completed the fifty days of Pentecost, and we will be celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit which crowns the Easter season. That is why on these Sundays—last week, this one, and the next—Jesus Christ through his church wants to speak to us about this Spirit that prolongs the presence of the Redeemer among humankind. These Sundays are therefore very important for our Christian formation. Above all, they instruct us about how to live our Christian life on earth with hope and joy and strength.

That is why we have to have our feet firmly planted on the earth, because this life that Christ shares with us is not meant to uproot us from history but rather to fortify our hearts as human beings making history. This life gives us Christian strength so that we can become creators of our own history. Christians who do not experience the force of the Gospel in earthly realities are what we call disincarnate, dislocated Christians; they would make better angels than humans. Christ came to give his doctrine, his faith, and his church to concrete human beings, to us who are at this Mass or listening on the radio as we reflect on the word of God *today*, this last day of April 1978, and *here* in San Salvador or in the towns or villages where this word is now being pondered.

Events of the week

We therefore cannot forget that in the midst of fears and hopes, advances and frustrations, people are preparing to celebrate Labor Day tomorrow. For example, on this day of the worker, who is not thinking about the seventeen workers of the factory of Central Izalco who have been imprisoned since January 30 for taking part in a strike and demanding a collective contract? On this day of the worker, who does not remember the thirty-five workers who have been segregated from their companions in the INCA factory while privileges and advantages have been showered on the other workers in order to discourage them from joining a labor union?

The same struggle against the right of workers to organize is evident in several factories where workers are denied this human right to organize to defend their own welfare. Naturally, it is not a question of a one-sided defense of workers against management interests; what is sought is mutual understanding so that both sides can make progress. Labor and capital, management and workers must join together for there to be true progress.

At the same time, sisters and brothers, we cannot forget that a group of lawyers is struggling to obtain an amnesty; they have published the reasons that led them to request this ruling on behalf of so many who are perishing in our prisons. These lawyers also denounce anomalies in the procedures of the First Criminal Court, where the judge does not allow lawyers to enter with their defendants even though the National Guard is allowed to be present and to intimidate the accused, who often bear evident marks of torture. A judge who does not denounce signs of torture but instead allows himself to be swayed by the damaging effect they have on the state of the accused is not a just judge.

I ask you, sisters and brothers, in view of these injustices that are seen all around us, even in the First Court and many other tribunals, not to mention judges who sell themselves: what is the Supreme Court of Justice doing? What is the function of this power, so transcendent in a democracy, which should be above every power and which should demand justice of everyone? I believe that the key to a great part of the malaise of our country is in the president of the Supreme Court of Justice and all his collaborators. They should show greater integrity in demanding of the legislature, of the tribunals, of the judges, of all the administrators of that sacrosanct word «justice», that they be truly agents of justice. I wish to congratulate the lawyers, whether Christian or not, who are acting with a great sense of justice in putting their finger on the sore. May all our lawyers truly represent a hope for justice, which is so ill-served in our society.

We also mourn this week the death of two policemen. They are our brothers. In the face of abuse and violence my voice has never been one-sided. With Christ's compassion I have stood by the side of the dead, the victims, those who suffer. I have asked that we pray for them, and we unite with their families in the solidarity of sorrow. I declare that the two policemen who were killed are two more victims of the injustice of our system, which I condemned last Sunday. Among its worst crimes is that it pits our poor against one another; policemen, workers, *campesinos*—they all belong to the class of the poor. The evil of the system is pitting the poor against the poor. Two policemen killed are two poor men who have been victims of others, also poor perhaps; and in any case they are victims of that god Moloch, insatiable for power and money (Lev 20:1-5). As long as the god Moloch maintains his power, he cares nothing about the life of the *campesinos* or the policemen or the soldiers; he struggles only to defend a system full of sin.

Perhaps a more hopeful sign is to be found in the inauguration yesterday of the third phase of the seminar on educational reform. I was happy to see the presence of our Catholic educational centers in this meeting where they will be able to defend the hopes of our people. If the result of our educational reform is just a solemn apparatus to be followed blindly in the schools by students and teachers, thus creating an instrument of domination and alienation instead of a process in which people are formed to become the creators of their nation's history, then it will be one of the most horrifying frustrations of an already lamentable educational system. I have the testimony of educational experts who say that they are hopeful that the solid principles of the reform of 1968 will not be lost but perfected and made reality. For example, they speak about an educational process in which the principal actors are the students themselves, who are taught how to analyze critically the reality of their nation. The students are prepared as agents of transformation instead of being alienated by an accumulation of textbooks and techniques that disguise the national reality. There are many technicians, many wise people, and many professionals who are competent in their particular field of study, but unfortunately they are like angels, disconnected from the reality in which

they live. The primary goal of education ought to be incarnating people in reality, helping them to analyze and critique their reality. It should be an education that prepares for conscious, democratic, political participation. How much good could be accomplished by that! So many Salvadoran values are being lost because our educational system has not made people responsible for this participation in the common good.

These experts who have studied the reforms of 1968 also tell me that in those reforms there is a sense of national autonomy that would be good to continue to cultivate. This would allow people to discover that they have the power in their own reality for developing a national identity, and they would also come to see the harmful effects of being dependent on other nations. We celebrate September 15 with much participation of school students, but what are we teaching these students? We are celebrating independence, but we are still extremely dependent. As the pope said in *Populorum Progressio*, «Cultural and economic imperialism is much worse than political imperialism» (PP 41). Our educational system ought to teach students this sense of national autonomy; it should make them agents of true independence who are critical of dependency and international slavery.

Another principle of the educational reform of 1968 is the cultivation of science and technology for the service of the common good and not for the benefit of a certain privileged few. Much of our technology serves just a few people and not the common good. Very often our technicians, who have been educated at great cost to the country, instead of placing their knowledge at the service of the common good, seek their own personal or family profit by leaving the country. There is a brain drain, a flight of talent that further impoverishes our poor nation which needs these technicians who could help resolve the many problems from which we are suffering.

The fruit of a true educational reform ought to be teachers and schools that help students to analyze critically the national reality and that transmit sound, effective criteria to the new generations. We ask the Lord to bless these efforts of the Ministry of Education so that they avoid all forms of manipulation and deception. To the contrary, may they provide a response to the anguish and the hope of our people in the midst of their great problems.

Those are, sisters and brothers, some of the hopeful signs for the church. I say this because a few weeks ago a young man who was listening to my homily asked me, «So what can we do?» What an interesting question! The same question was asked by those who listened to the preaching of the apostles: «What are we to do then?» (Acts 2:37). I told him, «The church cannot offer you a technique; the church does not possess any system. The church inspires the systems and individuals with Christian values so that you who live in the world might use your inventiveness and seek solutions». We already have structures, like those I just pointed out: the Supreme Court of Justice and the Ministry of Education. These are two structures that I really believe could do a great deal if only they were placed at the service of the people and truly sought to overcome our violent turbulence. At the very least, they could take some small but definitive steps that would lead us out of the quagmire in which our nation finds itself.

The church is not the responsible party in all of this. She is, however, responsible as the preacher of the Gospel and of the morality of Christ; she points out sins wherever they are to be found and calls people to conversion, because the day when all those now working or living in the present structures transform their hearts into true Christian hearts, on that day they will

become effective agents in the construction of a better nation. Therefore, the church must look at her specific power and gifts.

Life of the church

Here I share with you a series of news and announcements that make it possible for everybody to collaborate in the building up of our church. We come together here and feel at home. We gather together as a family and share our intimate hopes for life within the church.

Tomorrow we begin the month of May, the month of the Virgin. While it is true that we do not want to cultivate an attitude of sentimentality since that would not be true devotion to Mary, still I want to tell you, sisters and brothers, that Mary is an inspiration for all times. I would say the month of May should have meaning for all people, not just for Catholics, but for all those Salvadorans who are in search of strong hope during these times. Look at Mary, a woman of prayer, committed to her people, and above all dedicated to God: «I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word» (Luke 1:38). Thus we are invited to make May a month of prayer, a month of reflection, a month of being inspired by the Virgin Mary. Do this, and you will see how much good it does us. Pope Paul VI says, «For many people, popular piety is their only encounter with Christ and with God». Certainly Mary is a sure way to encounter God.

Tomorrow is the first of May. As always on the first of the month but especially tomorrow, Labor Day and the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, I want to invite you to a celebration that I am pleased to offer every month. In the beautiful chapel of Divina Providencia Hospital we will celebrate a Holy Hour at 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon. I invite you to celebrate on this first day of May this Holy Hour in Divina Providencia Hospital so that together we may ask God to be merciful to our country.

Within this context of popular piety I offer a reminder and an announcement. On Wednesday, May 3, our people will celebrate the feast of the Holy Cross. This is a popular feast for our people. If you want to learn about one of the most beautiful interpretations of this feast, then please read the famous poem of Alfredo Espino, «Al 3 de Mayo»¹. Here one discovers the customs of our nation: the May flowers, the first rains of winter, and the fruits that adorn the crosses in our yards. What a beautiful invitation to see in Christ's cross that liturgical greeting: *Ave Crux, spes unica!*² «Hail, O Cross, the only hope!» Sisters and brothers, let us make this feast more than a folkloric festival. Let us adorn the cross with fruits and flowers, with great hope in our hearts.

I also want to announce to you that next Sunday, May 7, the Sunday before Pentecost, we will celebrate the World Day of Social Communications. «Social communications» include all those instruments of the mass media—such as radio, press, television, and cinema—which are a wonderful means for communicating our thoughts. If they are not used well, however, they become instruments that can be manipulated to create false public opinion. In this regard we have often lamented the lack of truth in our means of social communications. So I make a call that we learn on that day to be critical in our use of newspapers, movies, television, and

¹ Reference to the sonnet «La Cruz de Mayo». See ESPINO A., *Jícaras tristes*, San Salvador, 2001, 63.

² Hymn for Vespers on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

radio. Let us listen critically and search for the truth. Not everything they tell us is the truth. Let us know how to weed out the many lies and discover the little truth that is there.

At the same time we can give thanks to God for our own means of communication. Thank God we have our little newspaper, *Orientación*, which day by day is growing in popularity. We have a radio station which enables us to present the church's thinking. But do not forget, sisters and brothers, that the radio is managed by human beings and there are many imperfections among human beings. Let us also learn how to distinguish between different programs. When the archbishop speaks, as he is doing at this moment, it is an official voice of the church, but I am not responsible for many other programs. I am not responsible for the *rancheras* that are sung or for all those other programs that are produced out of a desire to be faithful to the church's thinking instead of betraying it. You can be sure that all those who collaborate with the church's means of communication want to be in harmony with the thinking of the church. Therefore, before condemning our church's means of communication, know how to discern them well. Ask yourself whether it is not perhaps the case that the taste of some who listen to these Catholic media is a bit corrupted or manipulated and wants only programming aimed at maintaining a sinful situation; as a result, they are often offended when they hear a statement against injustice or against disorder.

At this time the feast of Pentecost is approaching. We are preparing to celebrate confirmation for a group of young people—this is one of the successes in our new pastoral approach to the sacrament of confirmation. On that same Pentecost Sunday our nation will celebrate Seminary Day. I ask for your prayers on this day. The very act of confirming young people will be a message about vocations and our seminaries. Please don't forget that we also need the material and economic support of the people of God in order to sustain the work of the church's means of communication and her seminaries.

I also want to announce that on May 3 a novena will begin in the parish of Miramonte and will conclude on May 11, the anniversary of the death of Father Alfonso Navarro, which we will celebrate with all the priests and all the communities of the archdiocese.

I want to greet and thank the community of San Marcos where Father Mario Sanconatto and his faithful celebrated their patron, Saint Mark. My heart was filled with joy to see a community that was so alive and pulsating with the Spirit.

I want to remind you also, sisters and brothers, that on Monday at one o'clock Father Luis Burguet will comment on my homily on our radio station. He makes this commentary with very sound, scientific criteria, and he knows how to bring to it other values that may naturally escape me.

Finally, I want to unite myself in prayer with the mourning families of the child Mittala Rivas Laguardia and of Don Hipólito Morales. I also ask prayers for María Isabel Campos and for all the needs of the families and the persons who at this moment are in communion with the church of the archdiocese.

So now, sisters and brothers, I want to make the readings that we have just heard a message for workers. In my homily today I want to address to the world of work some words illuminated by the word of God. When I say «worker» or «world of work», I am not thinking only about workers and *campesinos*. I am thinking also of employers and those who invest

capital. I am thinking of government workers and politicians, of those who work in business. I am thinking of those who have been the victims of fires and of all those who struggle to find work. All of this is work. I think also of those contemplatives who in their monasteries pray and mortify themselves; they fast and make themselves holy as victims for the world. We all work. The only ones who do not work are those who have become involved in different forms of vice or are lazy—these people do not participate in the construction of history. They are the ones who are truly marginalized.

But all of us are workers if we place what we have at the service of the common good: our labor, our capital, our politics, our hard work. Let us not be divided! Let us seek our proper vocation under this title of work. May I live true to the beauty of my priestly vocation! May you live true to the beauty of your profession as lawyer, doctor, or engineer. As a worker, may you experience pride in the use of your saw or your carving knife. As a *campesino*, may you experience pride in the use of your machete, your plow, and your oxen. And may you women in the market experience the joy of earning your living even beneath the inclemency of the sun. Each one of you is there, struggling as a worker. How beautiful it is to see that each person is the image of God—an image of the God of whom Jesus said, «My Father is at work until now» (John 5:17).

God created the world but did not make it perfect; rather, he entrusted it to those made in his image. He intentionally left the world incomplete so that human beings would perfect it. Today, when people working in modern technology discover the secrets of the atom and solar energy, the secrets of the earth and the ocean, they are not creating anything new. God, the great Worker, already made the created world, but God left it to his children, his images, to explore the atom, the land, the sea, and even space on interplanetary journeys. By their labor, human workers imitate God the Worker, and thus they are perfecting creation and transforming the world.

Christ is, therefore, the revelation of God the Worker and is also the revelation of the human worker. Let us focus on Christ, for as the first reading says today, «Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them» (Acts 8:5). This is what the church has been preaching: in Christ is found the great revelation of God and of humanity. But people have misinterpreted their situation and proclaimed a class struggle that has resulted in class distinctions. If we would only interpret our situation as Christ did, namely as a joining of the infinite work of God to the finite work of humans, then we would create a society of justice, peace, and progress. We preach Christ before all else. This is the central thought of my homily: «Christ Lives, and Christ has Risen».

Christ lives and is God

Christ lives and is God. In the second reading Saint Peter tells us, «Christ was put to death in the flesh, but he was brought to life in the Spirit» (1 Pet 3:18). «He was put to death in the flesh». All flesh dies; all flesh ages. Flesh is what creates differences among people, between old and young, between rich and poor. But this flesh dies. All material things die. They have only a relative, temporal value. «But he was brought to life in the Spirit». This is the life that is worth living: having a vision of how to work not for a flesh that perishes, not for some goods that remain behind after death, but having a vision of the great Worker who died like all workers but who lives now in the Spirit.

«The Spirit lives in you», Christ tells his apostles, «and will be with you forever» (John 14:16). If Christ continues to live today, sisters and brothers, it is thanks to this Spirit he gave us. But this Jesus is a working man. Do you remember when they associated him with the carpenters of Nazareth? «How can this man be preaching to us? Is he not the carpenter's son?» (Mark 6:2-3). This is the contemptuous view of those who see workers as simply the offspring of other workers. But when faith discovers that this unassuming worker of Nazareth bears within himself the life of God, then, sisters and brothers, we truly understand this beautiful passage of the Second Vatican Council: «Through labor offered to God, man is associated with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, who conferred an eminent dignity on labor when at Nazareth he worked with his own hands» (GS 22). Therefore, all workers can look at their hands and say, «There once were hands that were the hands of God, and my laboring hands can also be God's hands if I identify with that Christ who is God the Worker made flesh in a working man».

We should feel that all occupations—and I once again remind you here that Labor Day is a day for all people to celebrate—all occupations are meant to serve our neighbors and earn a living. They are human means which we place at God's service, as did Christ. They are worship of God, as I said last Sunday when speaking about the priestly dignity of the baptized. All the members of my baptized body have become members of Christ's body and so have a divine dignity. The sweat of the laborer, the concern of the professional, the sincere work of the politician who seeks the common good—all of these become identified with the thinking, with the hands, with the sweat, with the footsteps of Christ, God made man.

Therefore, sisters and brothers, we should consider in the second reading the full significance of Christ's inspiration for us. Addressing all workers and all people, Saint Peter says, «Glorify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil» (1 Pet 3:15-16).

We human beings together make up two worlds, sisters and brothers. There is the sincere world of those of us who try to follow Christ and allow our actions to be inspired by Christ. There is also the world of those who turn their backs on Christ; they are the ones of whom Christ says in today's gospel, «They do not accept the Spirit, and therefore they do not accept you either» (John 14:17). There is the world of those who suffer because they do good, and there is the world of those who suffer because they do evil. There is the world of those who are tortured and unjustly slandered and persecuted, and there is the world of those who persecute, perhaps believing that they are doing good by torturing and gunning down other people. But it is worth our while, Christ tells us, «to keep hope in our hearts and to give reasons for that hope» (1 Pet 3:15).

I believe that our church in San Salvador is giving the reasons for her hope, because she does not place her hope in power or money but in the source of her hope which is Christ crucified. Her hope is in her faithfulness to the Gospel. Her hope is in being faithful to God. Therefore, I tell my beloved priests, the religious communities, the Catholic schools, the parishes, and the base communities: do not be led astray by the allure of power and money or by following false ideologies. True hope is not found there. True hope is not to be found in a revolution of violence and bloodshed. True hope is not to be found in wealth and power. Nor is

it to be found in the left or the right. The hope for which we must account and which we valiantly defend has its reason in Christ who even after death, even after being murdered, reigns along with all those who with him have preached his justice, his love, his hope, his peace.

This, sisters and brothers, is Christ the Worker, the Christ who incarnates the infinite dignity of God in the limbs of our workers. Blessed are you workers on this Labor Day if you base the social demands that are your rights, not on the ideologies of this world, not confronting brute force with brute force, but on reason, on faith, on hope, and on the rights deriving from the God who is the source of every right.

What is Christ's dynamism?

My second thought is the following: what is Christ's dynamism? If Christ is the model and the source for every worker, where is his dynamism?

This Sunday prepares us to receive the Holy Spirit in two weeks' time, and so we hear Christ say, «I will ask the Father, and he will give you the Spirit» (John 14:16-17). Christ calls the Spirit «another Consoler»; he calls him the «Spirit of truth»; he also calls him the «consummation of unity». Sisters and brothers, this language of today's gospel is difficult to understand, but it is the chief message of this Sunday for Christ tells us, «I will not leave you orphans. I will return. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me because I live and you will live». (John 14:18-20). I am going to repeat this phrase which may seem puzzling, and yet it is the most sublime revelation of our Christianity: «I, Christ, am in the Father, and you are in me and I in you». Look at this beautiful chain! «Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him» (John 14:21).

What does this mean, sisters and brothers? It is the most sublime revelation. Your life as a worker, your life as a poor person living in a cardboard house, your life as a rich man living in a palace—your life has no meaning unless it becomes part of this flow that identifies it with Christ, because when united with Christ, you are with God and God is with you. This is Christ's dynamic; this is the divine energy of the Spirit.

It would seem that the church, after twenty centuries of so many persecutions and so much fury directed against her, should already have disappeared. In El Salvador it should already have been wiped out. But the dynamism and the strength of the church is not in us human beings who can be very fragile and very sinful. I am not surprised when people criticize me because of my sins—I know I am sinful. Who is not sinful? But those who look at the speck in another's eye so often forget the beam that is in their own eye. They should first remove the beam from their own eyes, the dung from their own vision, so that they do not look upon others with the same blurred vision. We must have this perspective: the church as a human institution would simply not continue in existence, but the church persists because she is composed of people who place their fragile trust in Christ, and Christ is in God, and God is in Christ and in us. This is a current that travels from earth to heaven through Christ, and through Christ it comes back down to earth bringing with it the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of strength.

Dear sisters and brothers, as we approach Pentecost on this Labor Day, I urge you to avoid making your work, whatever it might be, a source of divisions, contentions, and rivalries.

Every form of work is honorable, and every social situation is respectable when we allow ourselves to be caught up in this current that elevates us in Christ toward God and then descends again from God, full of love for humankind. That is why Christ establishes love as a sign of our remaining in this current and as an indispensable condition of our belonging to this life of God: «If you love me, you will keep my commandments» (John 14:15). At the conclusion of today's gospel Jesus says, «Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me» (John 14:21). Here is the secret of the true dynamic. Here is the true force of Christianity: love.

That is why I will never grow weary of preaching love, sisters and brothers, even though the revolutionary forces hope to accomplish everything with machine guns and other things that cannot establish peace but only hatred and rancor. People criticize the church because she preaches only love. Many people do not want to understand the love the church preaches because it is a dynamic love, not a love of death, not a lot of conformity; it is a love that struggles. On this May 1, I want to tell you workers that your struggle for your demands is right and just, but do not rely only on the feeble power of your hands and your organizations.

I want to read you these thoughts of Paul VI in his encyclical on evangelizing the modern world: «The church strives always to insert the Christian struggle for liberation into the universal plan of salvation which she herself proclaims» (EN 38). That means that the church does not view with indifference any of these struggles for liberation that are undertaken by the workers, by organizations, or by people who come together to defend human rights and true liberation. Take careful note: the church does not view them with indifference, but that does not mean that she identifies herself with them. What the church does is take the liberating efforts of humankind and insert them into the salvation which she proclaims, for the church knows that all salvation, all liberation, and all the just demands of workers, *campesinos*, and others will be ineffective and unsuccessful unless they become part of the great salvation that the church proclaims. The church is the liberator par excellence because she proclaims the work of Christ.

Christ's salvation

The third and final point of my homily concerns Christ's salvation. The great Worker, Christ, has done his job, a labor that will endure for centuries, and all human labor will endure if it is incorporated into the saving work of the Lord. There no work is insignificant. The work of every baptized person, no matter how humble, is meaningful. The labor of the *campesino* who earns a living with a machete is as great as that of a doctor who does so with a scalpel in the operating room or that of a politician, as long as they know how to make their work a service that seeks the integral salvation of humankind.

This is what the church preaches. That is why the church does not take sides with any liberating force of earth. The church cannot be the Popular Revolutionary Bloc, the church cannot be the FAPU³, the church cannot be the Christian Democratic Party nor the PCN⁴ nor ORDEN. The church cannot be any of these. But the church tells them all, «Courage in your efforts to establish true liberation!» Just as she also tells them, «That action is sinful!» whenever they abuse their power or try to lead politics along twisted paths or use the power of

³ The Front for Unified Popular Action (FAPU) brought together various popular organizations.

⁴ The Party of National Conciliation (PCN) was at that time the party of the government.

capital to exploit other human beings. The church is free to preach to one party or another, to one group or another, to one class or another. Not belonging to any of them, the church has autonomy so that she can say the same as Paul VI: «The church strives always to insert the Christian struggle for liberation into the universal plan of salvation which she herself proclaims» (EN 38). The salvation that the church announces is the salvation that Philip proclaimed to the people of Samaria; it is the salvation that Peter writes about in the letter we read today; it is the salvation that Saint John is preaching this Sunday in the whole world.

What liberation is it, then? Above all, liberation from sin. Christ says it clearly today, «The world cannot accept this Spirit because it neither sees nor knows it» (John 14:17). This is the world of sin. That is why the church will always have conflicts in the world: because she preaches liberation from sin. This is often the church's plan: not to agree with either side. Those who flatter the church thinking that she is on their side may very well hear her say one day, «No! You are a sinner. I am not on your side either!» That is liberation from sin.

The church would not be the church of the Gospel if she took sides with one social class and did not denounce their sins. The church would not be the authentic Gospel of Christ if she allowed herself to be manipulated by some group that sided with the poor but taught them the ways of violence and sin. The church promotes the human person through love. The church is love even though people do not want to understand this. Of course it is a strong love, a love like that of good parents who correct their children because they love them and do not want to see them fall into sin. That is why the church is often treated as though she has betrayed some friendship. Yet the church must speak the truth even to her most beloved friends. This is what love consists of: trying to snatch people from the clutches of sin in order to set them on the road of conversion to God. Anything else would not be true love.

Finally, the church is unity consummated in love. I remind you again of that beautiful revelation of Christ: «You in me, I in the Father, and the Father and you in me» (John 14:20). This is true unity. That is why the church must be a manifestation of this unity and communion. Often, when the scandal of disunity occurs, the church must ask for forgiveness because she has not preached the truth. Disunity in the church is sad, sisters and brothers; it is a sign opposed to Christ. The church is not true to herself when she is divided, unless those divisions are just passing crises that are overcome through service and love.

If our church is truly the labor of Christ the great Worker, then she will bring us grace and truth. In the first reading, when the news about Philip's preaching to the Samaritans reached Jerusalem, the church authorities, in the persons of Peter and John, went to Samaria to pray, to impose hands, and to call down the Holy Spirit. We said that the Spirit is the energy of Christ, and Christ shared this energy with the church. The church in turn administers this energy in her communion, in her sacraments, in her liturgical life, and in her faith. Therefore, sisters and brothers, as we meditate now on the word of God, you and I are being invaded by the Spirit. At this very moment, as the communities around the country are reflecting on this word, do you know what they are like? They are like those high-tension cables that carry electric energy from the powerful generators of the Rio Lempa and distribute it throughout the entire republic. For us Christians the great generator is the Holy Spirit that Christ gave us. Christ lives through his Spirit in the church. Connected to this generator, our pastoral agents, our ecclesial communities, and all of Christianity are transmitting the energy of God's Spirit to every citizen.

And so, sisters and brothers, what can we do at this moment in the history of our nation? It is very easy to tell you. Let us accept the Spirit Christ has given us. Let each Christian try to be more and more a depository of the Spirit that Christ brought when he said to his apostles: «I will not leave you orphans. I will give you my Spirit, my dynamism, my truth, my unity, my love. Because you love me, they will know that you are my disciples, and they will know that you love me because you keep my commandments» (John 14:15-18). This is true, sisters and brothers: any form of Christianity in El Salvador that does not keep the commandments, the law of God, is not authentic Christianity. This is a call, then, to conversion. May all those homes that have not received the blessing of the sacrament of matrimony come and receive this blessing, so that the presence of the Spirit and love for God's law may dwell in those homes. May all those who kill and steal cease from their crimes for you are disobeying the law of the Lord who commands us not to kill or to steal (Exod 20:13,15). May all our institutions become true instruments of the law of the Lord. We would not need to change structures if all who live in the structures fulfilled this word of Christ. We must love Christ in a practical way by fulfilling his law.

As we prepare for the feast of Pentecost, let us promise our Lord Jesus Christ that when the Spirit comes in two weeks, he will not find hearts that are closed to God's law or families that have not received the Lord's blessing. May it be said in all parts of our country that we love Christ because we try to observe his commandments. Let us stand and proclaim our creed.