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GOD'S KINGDOM IS THE TRUE WEALTH OF HUMANKIND

Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

30 July 1978

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52

This is the Seventeenth Sunday of the year, and the readings today are a continuation of the previous Sundays. The gospel, which is the main reading, continues that precious chapter of Saint Matthew that's called «the parables of the kingdom». You'll recall that for three Sundays now we've been hearing comparisons about what «the kingdom of heaven is like» (Matt 13:44), and we've had the opportunity to understand better the nature of the kingdom to which we belong. This is the center of Christ's preaching. It's a tremendous honor for the Christian community to know that, even when it interprets these things poorly, it is still assimilating individually and communally that mystique of the kingdom of heaven.

Let us try to meditate with a purity of faith and intention, dear sisters and brothers, so that we will know how to rise above all the suspicions and fears that this word of God arouses in the world. If we truly want to be Christians, we must understand and try to live according to everything Christ has tried to tell us by summoning us to this kingdom: «I call you for this purpose: I don't want a mystified Gospel; I don't want Christians who are conformist. Those who do not agree with this are not with me». Christ's attitude is an uncompromising one that sits poorly with those who want a Gospel that doesn't give rise to conflicts and difficulties, especially in these times that are already so ridden with conflicts and difficulties. It's very difficult to move about like an eel, slithering away from the conflicts that God's word must inevitably awaken if we truly experience the fullness of the kingdom as the logical consequence of being persons who have accepted by our baptism our belonging to that kingdom. This is the center of Christ's preaching; it's what marks the authentic qualities of the true church.

At this time the kingdom of God continues to be preached, sisters and brothers, and I rejoice greatly because there are many communities, there are many women and men who are trying to reflect more deeply on these counsels and to live them with a true sense of faith. These counsels are not mine; they are the Divine Master's, and I am simply serving as his echo.

In today's parables and in the other two complementary readings I find a definite teaching that the word of God wants to give us this Sunday, and so I would title my homily: «The Kingdom of God is the True Wealth of Humankind». I will divide my thoughts into these three ideas: first, true wealth; second, Christ personifies true wealth; and third, the failure of false wealth.

True wealth

In these times when wealth is set before us as an idol, we do well to make our prayer like that of Solomon in the first reading: «Give me wisdom» (1 Kgs 3:9). We should ask to know the difference between true riches and false so that we don't idolatrously adore wealth that has feet of clay and so that we become true worshipers of the true God. Let us strive, as we said in the prayer of today's Mass, to appreciate the riches of earth for their relative value while acknowledging that the absolute and truest value resides in the One who is truly wealthy: Christ our Lord.

What is true wealth? Christ explains this in two exquisite parables. First, the kingdom of heaven is like a man who finds a treasure in a field and hides it; he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field which is seemingly not worth much but is of great value to him because he has discovered a treasure there (Matt 13:44). This was a reality in the ancient East, where there were continual invasions by brigands and political forces. Those who owned greater or lesser wealth generally buried it in clay vessels whenever they had to flee before an invading band. Many never returned, and so many treasures remained buried there in the fields of the Middle East. Sometimes a person would scrape the ground and find one of these treasure vessels; it might be a pot full of gold coins or perhaps something else, but it was a very valuable treasure. The person might say, «I'll hide it and go and buy this field». Naturally, he would buy it at a cheap price and so would become the owner of the treasure. Christ is not justifying here the trickery or deception that might be involved in such a transaction; rather, he wants to teach us how diligent people can be when they've found a treasure.

He also tells the parable of the precious stone. The kingdom of heaven is like a man who meets a merchant who offers to sell him a valuable authentic gem that is superior to all the gems he already has. The man then realizes that all his other gems only appear to be valuable; they are not as genuine and priceless as the one he is being offered. He is ready to sell them to buy the one that is worth much more, and he doesn't mind losing the gems he already has in order to obtain this other one that will bring him immense returns (Matt 13:45). What is the Lord telling us with this parable?

Without using parables, the first reading also speaks to us about this sense of discerning between the true and the false. God appears in dreams to Solomon, the wisest of kings: «Ask me for what you want, and I will give it to you» (1 Kgs 3:5). For someone caught up in idolizing power and wealth, the temptation would have been to say, «Give me a lot of gold; give me a lot of power; hand my enemies over to me; let me rule over the peoples; give me a long life». I wonder, sisters and brothers, what we ourselves might have asked of the Lord if some night he had appeared and told us, «I'm going to give you whatever you ask of me». Here we get to know something about human criteria. Despite being terribly tempted as a ruler, Solomon does honor to his father David and raises up to the Lord a precious prayer: «Lord, you know everything. You have established me as ruler of this people that is so numerous and so difficult. What I ask of you is a docile heart for governing this people, a heart that can discern between evil and good, a wise and understanding heart» (1 Kgs 3:7-9). This is the merchant who knows the value of the truly precious gem. This is the prudent man who finds a treasure and buys the field. It's a magnificent teaching today's gospel gives us: discerning between what is essential and what is worth little; discerning between the true God of wealth and the false wealth idolized by human beings. And God's response to Solomon is marvelous: «Because you have not asked me for long life or for riches or for the life of your enemies but have asked me for a

discerning heart to be able to hear the people and to govern them, I do as you request: from this day on I will give you a wise and discerning heart superior to that of anyone who has gone before you or will come after you» (1 Kgs 3:11-12).

In today's second reading Saint Paul takes up this teaching about the true wealth of the kingdom. In chapter eight, which we've been reading these last three Sundays, Saint Paul teaches us that the true wealth of the human heart is justification and glorification. Even as pilgrims on earth, human beings have value, but only because God makes them his sons and daughters. It is by our redemption that God has freed us from sin and made us pleasing to him as his children. After this pilgrimage comes eternal life, joy in the kingdom of God, where each one of us—as last Sunday's parable of the wheat and the weeds told us—will shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father (Matt 13:43) The truth wealth of God's kingdom is this justification, this eternal destiny of humankind, this supernatural life of human beings called to be children of God.

Sisters and brothers, I want us to stress this great teaching because the church is not on earth to gain privileges, to seek support in power and wealth, or to ingratiate herself with the mighty of the world. The church does not exist even to erect great material temples or monuments. The church is not on the earth to teach the wisdom of the earth. The church is the kingdom of the God who is giving us every opportunity to be divine children. The ones who are great in the kingdom of the church are those who live in holiness. The ones who are great are those who, like Solomon, can feel in their breasts a heart that is very wise and very united with God. The only ones who are great are those men and women who by their repentance and conversion become true children of God so that they can take part in the joy of his sacraments, in the happiness reserved for those who have preserved their innocence or, if they've lost it, have recovered it through penance. Only the holy have happiness. Only the truly holy are free. The only true persons are those who do not fear anything on earth because they fear one thing alone: losing God's friendship. Preserving that friendship with God is their only treasure. All other friendships are viewed as unimportant when God tells them, as he told his friend Abraham, «You are my friend. You are my child. As coheir with Christ, you're destined to possess my kingdom, my happiness. I will be your reward» (Rom 8:17).

Sisters and brothers, this is not a utopia. It's the great truth that should fill the human heart as Saint Paul has told us today, going back to our prehistory: «Before you existed, God loved you and predestined you to be conformed to the image of his Son. That likeness to Christ is what justifies you, and in that glorified Christ you also will be glorified» (Rom 8:29-30). See how the wisdom of God embraces human beings from before their existence to beyond their death. What is life, these few years, if they aren't filled with this history of God who clothes us with his love?

We are moved when we reflect: «Nine months before I was born there was a woman who loved me ardently. She didn't know what I was going to be like, but she loved me because she carried me in her womb. And when she gave birth to me, she took me in her arms because her love was not just then beginning—she conceived it along with me». A mother loves, and that's why abortion is so abhorrent, because the mother who aborts is not faithful to the love she should have for the child before it's born, even as God loves it in eternity. God exquisitely resembles a mother with child. God held me in his bosom and loved me and destined me; he has already thought about my days and my death. What may happen to me now matters little to me; God already knows it. Let us not be afraid, sisters and brothers. We are living through

difficult times of change. We don't know whether this very afternoon we'll be prisoners or murder victims. We don't know what the forces of evil are going to do with us. But of one thing I'm sure: God knows even those who are disappeared, those who are mourned in the mystery of a kidnapping, and he loves them. If God allows those disappearances, it's not because he's helpless. He loves us, and he keeps on loving. He also loves our history, and he knows the paths that lead to our land's redemption.

Let us not distrust this great truth. This is the true treasure of God's kingdom: faith, hope, and prayer, the intimate force that unites us with God. Let us always ask for this, sisters and brothers, as Solomon did: «Lord, don't give me riches. Don't give me a long life or a short life. Don't give me the powers on earth that intoxicate people. Don't give me the absurd worship of this world's false idols. Purify my intentions, Lord, and give me true discerning wisdom so that I can distinguish between good and evil. Give me the conviction that Saint Paul felt, of being loved by you» (1 Kgs 3:9).

It's not in today's readings, sisters and brothers, but I urge you to reflect on the beautiful hymn to love that concludes chapter eight of the letter to the Romans (Rom 8:35). Take time to savor it. Who will separate us from God's love? Neither death nor hunger nor the sword—and we could add a long list of things that are happening now. Nothing can separate us from the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus. But this leads us to a serious problem that has been debated in our theology over the centuries: it's the great problem of predestination.

Christ personifies true wealth

Saint Paul tells us about predestination: «God called me and predestined me to be conformed to the image of his Son and to be glorified with him» (Rom 8:29-30). This means that not all people are predestined. This is the sad truth, as Christ himself said, «Many are called, but few are chosen» (Matt 22:14). These are the elect, of whom Saint Paul said today, «Those whom he loved, he chose» (Rom 8:30) And so there is anxiety in the human heart: «Will I also be one of those who will be condemned by God?»

This great anxiety became a major theological problem, and there were tremendous arguments about predestination. The years during and after the Council of Trent gave rise to the great movements among renowned Dominican and Jesuit theologians who distinguished and defended different theories of predestination. They were trying to reconcile these two great truths that our limited understanding finds almost impossible to reconcile: there is the grace of God who wants to save me, and there is the human freedom which can reject God's grace. Why are people condemned if God desires to save us all? Why is it said that God wants to save everyone if some people are condemned?

What I would like to do in this homily, sisters and brothers, is at least to sow some uncertainty. No one can feel certain of being chosen. We all have to adopt that great recommendation of Saint Peter¹: «Work out your salvation with fear and trembling» (Phil 2:12). What Luther taught is false: that believing in my salvation will give me salvation. You must still conduct yourself well—remember what Christ says: «Those who love me keep my commandments» (John 14:21). Let us recall especially what Saint Paul told us today so that we'll know whether we're on the path of salvation or the path of perdition: «He chose you to be

¹ The text is actually from Saint Paul.

like Christ» (Rom 8:29). Those who strive to become like Jesus Christ are on the right road. Those who reject Christ and his teachings and his church will go astray if they are not converted.

In a little while I'm going to relate to you a series of events that occurred this week so that you can analyze them for yourselves. And in these events, see if you can discern which people might be at this moment predestined and which ones not predestined unless they're converted to God. We should be frightened! And now a call goes forth to all those who would play around with the church: take seriously the word of the church. It's not a question of my imposing myself by instilling fear or asking for false respect. It's just that I feel that I would not be fulfilling my duty if I did not say that predestination is a mysterious uncertainty that can be resolved only with a great sense of love, community, and justice and by imitating Jesus Christ. I would be giving you a false security if I told you, «Yes, we're all going to be saved. Let's live as we wish, for Christ is already calling us to God's kingdom on earth». Do you think that Christ would have died tortured on the cross if the problem of salvation were not such a serious matter? How can we behold with indifference a Redeemer of humankind who paid for people's sins with such bitterness and pain? How can we be indifferent to sin in all its manifestations, especially when it is manifested in social injustices? How can we make fun of God when we are accomplices in these injustices? We must try to improve the country so that there are no longer great differences between the images of Christ, between those called to be like Christ, for they are now very clearly differentiated: not between those chosen by God and those rejected by God, but between rich and poor. This is not the criterion of true wisdom. The challenge is to think as God thinks and not otherwise.

In the end, sisters and brothers, these great theological problems come down to just one thing. It would be interesting to review the currents of theological opinion that have tried to resolve the great problem of predestination, and that's being done today, but modern theology is also finding new channels and is separating itself a bit from the merely traditional.

Theologians are saying, for example, just what Saint Paul said without all the modern theological implications: «God predestined those whom he loved to resemble Christ, the firstborn among many sisters and brothers» (Rom 8:29). Here we find a key: Christ is at the same time both God and man. As God he is the one who predestines or condemns, but as man he has assumed the responsibility for all human beings. Even great sinners are saved if they identify with Christ because in his human flesh he has paid for the sins of everyone and has built a great community that is called his church, his kingdom. «The kingdom of heaven is like ...» In this way he tells us that this great problem of whether I'll be saved or not can be resolved with another question: am I trying to identify with that Christ and his community, or am I struggling against that community and against that Christ? When all is said and done, God will not condemn those who accept him, but he will reject those who reject him.

Ultimately, then, the problem has to do with our own will, a will filled with hope, a will that embraces Christ and confesses, «Lord, even though I've been a great sinner, wash me with your blood. Unite me to you and to your flesh which paid for my sins on the cross. I become part of this church where there are good fish and bad fish, but I will try to be a good fish». This is our great hope of salvation as Christians: trying to become like Christ our Lord.

Here, sisters and brothers, I take much delight in recalling a beautiful passage from the Second Vatican Council. The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World in section 22 presents Christ as the great revelation of the mystery of humanity. Human beings do not know

their proper vocation except by knowing Christ. Those who do not know Christ and do not try to know him suffer from myopia; they are mutilated, incomplete, lacking the criterion of wholeness. The person of Christ was prefigured in the first Adam, but that first Adam destroyed the human image by sinning. Then came the second Adam, Jesus Christ, at once God and man, to reveal to men and women the fullness of their vocation and to help them recover from the sin of Adam and become members of this second generation. Christ told Nicodemus, «Truly I say to you, that no one can enter the kingdom of heaven without being born again». «How is that?» asked Nicodemus. «How can someone who is already old reenter the mother's womb and be born again?» Jesus responded, «That's not what I'm saying. Don't understand it materially. I'm talking about a spiritual rebirth. Those who are not born of water and the Spirit, those who do not take on the Spirit of Christ, those who do not become part of my kingdom cannot be saved» (John 3:3-5).

In other words, dear sisters and brothers—and in this also let us rejoice—this vocation of being in Christ is not something only we Christians have. Be careful about feeling proud about being Christian. Otherwise we might resemble those Israelites who said to Christ, «Don't reproach us! We are children of Abraham!» Christ told them, «Being a child of Abraham matters little because God, if he wants, can make even these rocks into children of Abraham. What matters is the justice of God» (John 8: 39-40; Matt 3:9).

Accordingly, sisters and brothers, let us not pride ourselves in coming to church or in being Christians. Rather, let us reflect that beyond the limits of Christianity there are many people who maybe adore false gods but who have a conscience so upright and pure that there's no doubt that Christ is saving them. I remember when I was studying in Rome and Pope Pius XI received that great philosopher and humanist, Mahatma Gandhi, who walked through the streets of Rome wrapped in a sheet and leading a goat. In his discourse Pius XI said, «We have come to know a holy pagan». What a beautiful expression! Among pagans there are saints, perhaps more saints than in our Catholic Church! Because Christ, who is the revelation of humanity, can be known by all. Mahatma Gandhi used to say, «How can Christians have a book as beautiful as the Gospels and not experience the great revolution that is the world's sanctification and liberation?» We don't give life to what we have. We know Christ, but we don't live his life.

But there is no other way, sisters and brothers, and realizing this helps us resolve those great fears about «Will I be saved, or will I be condemned?» Let's not worry so much about that. Rather, let us try to know Jesus Christ personally and to belong intimately to his church. Instead of fighting the church, let us try to understand her with all her logically painful consequences. We shouldn't try to create a Christianity to suit us; we shouldn't try to domesticate the Gospel; instead, we should let ourselves be domesticated by the Gospel. If we truly want to be saved, we should try to follow the authentic Christ. Many idolaters of power and money will not enter the kingdom of heaven because they don't identify with God's plan which is this: God predestined us to become like Christ and to be justified in him and to be glorified in him so that we form a community of brothers and sisters where Christ is the firstborn of many (Rom 8:29). Let us feel that this is what our church is: a community of sisters and brothers.

And now finally, dear sisters and brothers, you understand the beauty of these same words: «dear sisters and brothers». Let it not be just a hollow expression. Rather, let each of us truly feel that all my neighbors are my brothers and my sisters. Let us see others through

Christ, our elder brother, and let us try to be like Christ so as to be worthy to be called brother or sister and to call everyone else brothers and sisters, whether they are poor or rich, because the Lord loves us all.

The failure of false wealth

But there is a problem, and this is my third thought: the failure of false wealth. Those poor idolaters of false wealth! They are worshiping an idol with feet of clay. In today's gospel Jesus Christ uses the comparison of fishing: the net is thrown into the sea and brings out both good fish and bad; on the shore, the fishermen select out the fish that are good for eating or selling; the fish that are useless are thrown into the oven, says Christ (Matt 13:47-50). It's the same with the wheat and the weeds. So we shouldn't be surprised that the net with which our church fishes for people contains many good fish, thank God, but it also contains many Christians who are like the bad fish that will be thrown into the oven when the time comes for them to be sorted out.

The problem of predestination is that of choosing and rejecting the kingdom of God preached by Christ. We are experiencing a moment of struggle between truth and falsehood, between sincerity—which hardly anyone now believes in—and intrigue and hypocrisy. Let us not be shocked, sisters and brothers. Let us try to be sincere; let us try to love the truth; let us try to build ourselves up in Christ Jesus. These are days when we should have a great sense of deciding and discerning. That's one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and we should pray hard for it at this time, as Solomon did: «Give me a heart that knows how to distinguish between good and evil» (1 Kgs 3:9). And as an example of different kinds of fish, I want to present to you the events of this week so that you can analyze for yourselves and see which people are walking the path of goodness and which people are on the road to perdition.

Events of the week

On Thursday the information office of the presidency of the republic obliged the mass media to give ridiculous coverage to news about an alleged terrorist plot which involved me as archbishop and the communications media that belong to our archdiocese.² Perhaps some people are expecting a clarification from me, but I really don't think it's necessary. The calumny is so gross that it falls under its own weight. What the publicity has done instead is call forth new testimonies of solidarity, for which I'm most heartily grateful. An example is this wonderful telegram that came to me from Miravalle: «People believe in your pastoral work. The truth in your words prevails». Thank you very much. That's the kind of thing I've received in response to the publication. I don't think they were expecting to arouse such solidarity for my poor self. All the same, by its sheer mediocrity, that publicity stunt is an interesting exhibition of falsehood and superficiality, and I want to take advantage of it to repeat the call I've made so many times to my beloved people: that they learn how to read the papers and listen to the radio and watch television. Not everything that's seen in the mass media is truth—there are many lies. People have to have a critical awareness so that they're not the toys of those who manhandle public opinion with such disrespect.

For example, just consider the following. How could such a defamatory bulletin be published without any indication of its provenance and without anyone taking responsibility

² «Authorities Unveil Terrorist Conspiracy» in *La Prensa Gráfica* (27 July 1978).

for it? How can editors abandon journalistic integrity by indiscriminately publishing a mendacious press interview that arose solely out of the imagination of the president's information office? The item states, «In response to questions of reporters, spokespersons for public security limited themselves to explaining that the confiscated documents mentioned something about this»³. Are they serious? In regard to their fourth point, where are the proofs that present evidence before public opinion about such dangerous concrete accusations? Critical readers have to laugh at the idea of publishing a list of crimes with no convincing or serious arguments. Who can fail to see the perversity of this attempt to discredit the archbishop as a subversive, to suppress our radio station YSAX, to eliminate our newspaper *Orientación*, and to keep justifying new forms of repressing the people by implicating them in such activities? At the same time, they displayed photographs of other bishops in cordial communion with top government officials⁴. Can you observe the way the papers manipulate things? Learn how to read them, sisters and brothers!

An expert in social communication—I'm not one myself—could point out other grave sins against journalistic ethics, but these faults are obvious enough so that we shouldn't be surprised by this new maneuver. Still, there is a need to denounce as unjust and dishonest not only this action of the information office of the presidency of the republic but also the behavior of our press, which so meekly allows itself to be managed by the idols of power and money.

On the other hand, I want to express my gratitude and my admiration for *La Crónica del Pueblo*, the only newspaper that has a sense of professional ethics and above all a free and courageous spirit. It published information about the origin of the bulletin and gave those accused the opportunity to deny what many have called a «despicable ploy». As I did then, I repeat here before my people that I have a clean conscience; I am in no way a party to that supposed plot. If there were any seriousness in our judicial system, there would be sufficient motive to initiate criminal proceedings. Unfortunately, in El Salvador we cannot rely on support of that kind. Rather, the situation is aggravated by an arbitrary, tendentious law which constantly threatens justice and peace in the country instead of promoting the common good and defending justice as every law should. Despite all this, relying on God's help and faithful to his difficult mandate, I will try to continue to accompany, defend, and guide this beloved people as the pope encouraged me to do during my recent visit—even though some people have also tried to discredit that visit⁵.

Analyze now for yourselves another event using Christian criteria. That's why we meditate on the word of God, to help us learn to judge history and life by God's word. On July 28 a military operation was carried out in the center of the city; the soldiers searched and occupied the Casa del Maestro, which is the headquarters of the National Association of Salvadoran Educators. This operation lasted about four hours, and it causes concern on a number of points. The soldiers arrested twenty-three persons, most of them teachers and leaders of said association, and other persons were arrested as well. After the locale was occupied by the police force, there was also concern about the loss of several thousand colones

³ Ibid.

⁴ On the same page as the news implicating the archbishop in supposed terrorist plots, there appeared a photograph of the nuncio with the bishops of El Salvador—with the exception of Archbishop Romero—together with President Carlos H. Romero and other civil authorities in the Cathedral of Santa Ana after the Eucharistic celebration. See *La Prensa Gráfica* (27 July 1978).

⁵ Father Juan León Montoya questioned and criticized the *ad limina* visit of Archbishop Romero to Pope Paul VI. See *La Prensa Gráfica* (26 July 1978).

in cash, which represent the contributions of members. There is also fear for the office materials and equipment.

In San Miguel the office of a local political party was searched⁶. This party is recognized by the electoral law and as such has legal standing. It seems that such searches in El Salvador are becoming a regular occurrence, and the worst of it is that countless reasons are invented to cover up the real motives behind these operations.

The strikes in TAPPAN and the sugar refinery continue. There are serious labor conflicts in Sacos Cuscatlán, where a strike broke out on Friday the twenty-eighth because of the intransigence of management in negotiating a collective contract.

This sad news has also arrived from San Bartolomé Perulapía: the brothers Aniceto Santos and Heliodoro Santos were executed by members of ORDEN, who are now called «the commandos». They claim they will kill eight more. This murder took place on the border of El Rodeo and Histagua. Aniceto had already been imprisoned and so had no further debt to pay; nevertheless he was killed. His mother, Octaviana Santos, is left alone; two others sons suffered the same fate. She now has only her daughters with her.

News also came from Santa Ana that Norma Solórzano, their best catechist and the person in charge of the religion course at the parish school, was taken away by about seven armed men dressed in civilian clothes. They left her two small children. Last night we received further news stating that Mrs. Norma de Solórzano, director of the religious program and catechetics in the parish of Madre de El Salvador in Santa Ana, had been accompanied by a priest to the National Police and the National Guard in Santa Ana, but later it was denied that she was there. Pressure was applied through the United States Embassy, which has just informed us that the woman is at the National Police station of San Salvador, and they say she is in good condition.

There is also some good news. At last the collective contract in the factory Guantas Internacional was signed, with both sides reaching a definitive agreement.

Life of the church

We are also happy about the church events of the past week, such as the solemn celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Colegio María Auxiliadora and the wonderful ceremony of priestly ordination of the young Costa Rican, Father Carlos Arias, yesterday in the chapel of the Externado San José. There was also a seminar on sociology of religion sponsored by the UCA; it provided us with some very opportune teachings about living religious life in accord with what the Gospel demands in our present situation so that our religion doesn't become simply another tool of the system.

Last Sunday in Paleca we had a wonderful Mass to make reparation for the time the Blessed Sacrament was robbed there. This afternoon the parish will continue this celebration of atonement. Also, in the parish of Aculhuaca in Ciudad Delgado we experienced great delight during the feast of their patron, Saint James.

⁶ National Democratic Union (UDN). See *La Crónica del Pueblo* (29 July 1978).

Today, sisters and brothers, is the third anniversary of the bloody outcome of a historical demonstration⁷. Yesterday there was a Mass in the basilica, and various people have requested prayers for their deceased. I remember now Roberto Antonio Miranda Lopéz and Carlos Roberto Fonseca, but I want to invite all of us to pray for everyone who died and also for the conversion of those who are causing such violent and difficult situations in our country.

Finally, dear sisters and brothers, with my whole heart I call upon everyone to celebrate our patronal feast of the Divine Savior. The solemn novena began on Friday in this cathedral. If you can't come personally, tune in on your radios at five o'clock in the afternoon, and join in the prayer to our Divine Patron who is able to save us. Surely due honor will be given to that precious name of Divine Savior! The main events of the celebration will be next Sunday, but on Saturday at four o'clock in the afternoon there will be the traditional *Bajada* (descent), leaving from the basilica for the traditional *Descubrimiento* (discovery), which happens here, in front of the cathedral. At eight o'clock in the evening, also here in the cathedral, there'll be a joyful vigil service to pray for the needs of our country. And please take note, the Sunday Mass will be in the plaza out front at nine o'clock in the morning. This will allow time for the arrival of the pilgrimages, which I hope will also respond to this call. Let us hope that all the parishes send representatives to honor the Divine Patron of the archdiocese and the republic. Unfortunately, since it's a Sunday, we won't have many priests—they'll be attending to their parishes—but we've told the fathers that they can come if they wish to leave the Mass with their own community in order to concelebrate in this wonderful sign of the unity of our diocese. So at nine o'clock next Sunday morning, in front of the cathedral, we'll concelebrate a Mass that will be a splendid manifestation of a people who place all their faith in the Divine Savior.

As you can see, dear sisters and brothers, we are led by the word of God, with its beautiful teachings about true and false wealth, to analyze carefully the events of the week so that we can discover, as did Solomon inspired by God, where we can find what is good, the wisdom of Christ, the road of salvation, and also where we can find the enemy of God, damnation, the broad roads that lead to the abyss. And so, keeping before us not only the theoretically enlightening words but also the concrete ways along which concrete human beings are walking—some on ways of salvation and others on ways of damnation—we cry out with the Lord's own voice: «Be converted! God doesn't want to punish you. Return to the right path». May the feast of the Divine Savior make everyone feel personally the love with which God clothes our life in Christ. He predestined us in Christ so that we will become like him who has been constituted the firstborn among many and so be justified and glorified in him (Rom 8:29-30).

We are going to experience this beautiful reality in our Eucharist for the altar is already prepared. Let us adore this Christ even without seeing him for he is truly present in our faith, and let us feel strongly during this novena of the Divine Savior that he is very close to our country, to our hopes, to our dreams. Let us proclaim our faith.

⁷ On 30 July 1975 President Arturo Armando Molina authorized the minister of defense, Carlos Humberto Romero, to suppress a demonstration of university and secondary school students. In the massacre the following were assassinated: Carlos Fonseca, Balmore Cortéz Vásquez, Reynaldo Hasbún, Eber Gómez Mendoza, Roberto Antonio Miranda, Napoleón Orlando Calderón Grande, Sergio Antonio Cabrera, Carlos Humberto Hernández, María E. Miranda, José Domingo Aldana, and others. The students were protesting the violent eviction from the Centro Universitario de Occidente carried out by the Armed Forces on 25 July 1978. See «In Commemoration: the Student Massacre of 30 July 1975», http://www.ues.edu.sv/docs/2003/30julio_1975.htm.