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THE HOUR OF GLORIFICATION

Ascension of the Lord

7 May 1978

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 1:17-23

Matthew 28:16-20

My dear sisters and brothers, the liturgical year that we follow from Sunday to Sunday reaches today its culminating week. We celebrate the ascension of Christ this Sunday and next Sunday the coming of the Holy Spirit. The work of Christ was announced before Christmas, and the great mystery of a God who became man filled us with joy during the days of Christmas and Epiphany. Then during the days of Lent we prepared for the mystery of the God-man who dies on the cross and is raised to new life for us. Finally, since Holy Saturday night and Easter until now, the time of ascension and Pentecost, we have celebrated fifty days of fulfillment, of jubilee, of hope in this crowning of Christ's work. This is the meaning of today's feast.

Let us participate therefore in our Sunday liturgy with a new spirit so that we absorb strength for our journey through history from this fount of holiness, rejoicing, and profound happiness. That is why the one who gives the homily must be careful to illuminate the concrete realities of history with this mystery of Christ, which is always the same since it is eternal. This duty of the preacher is often a difficult one because this light of redemption that illuminates our path on earth must often throw light on and confront very unpleasant realities. But the preacher must do this; otherwise the Gospel is not the light of the world and a lamp for our feet.

Events of the week

I am therefore happy to cite the concrete events of our week and place them within the ambit of our reflections on the word and the mysteries we celebrate. Our reality is not always disagreeable, but generally it clashes violently with the great plans of God's love which want our nation and our world to be a city illuminated by the civilization of love. God wants to show us the road that leads to the destiny that is set before us today in the ascension of the Lord. On what roads have the people of our archdiocese been journeying during this past week?

Above all else I ask you to remember in this Mass and to pray for our beloved Father Ladislao Segura. Last Sunday when I preached here, I was still unaware of the sad event of his sudden death in a room at the rectory of the church of El Carmen in Santa Tecla. He spent every Saturday afternoon and evening at this house in order to fulfill religiously the obligation of every religious: community life. Because of their work Jesuits often live apart, but every week or two they have an obligation to come together in one of their community houses. Father Segura was very faithful to this obligation, and every Saturday afternoon he was with his brother Jesuits in the church of El Carmen in Santa Tecla. He used those Saturday evenings to

study and to prepare his homily for Sunday. He was a man who always tried to stay up to date in the ecclesiastical sciences. At the time of his death his companions found on his desk preparatory documents for the bishops' meeting that will take place in Puebla in October and some homily notes for Sunday and for Labor Day, May 1. So he died while he was working; he died working. That's why they said at his funeral on Monday that he was a beautiful symbol of labor.

I want to highlight three great aspects of his life. He was a fisherman of vocations, as the seminarians said Friday on their radio program. He was a fisherman of vocations! So many priests and so many seminarians discovered and cultivated their vocation due to the intervention of Father Segura, who would speak with their families and their pastors! He was also very solicitous for religious life. Religious communities, especially those of women, found in Father Segura solid support and a worthy guide. A third aspect is that he was a man of sound doctrine. He gave counsel to all who approached him with theological or canonical concerns. With the prudence of a truly wise man he did not give an immediate response but asked for time to study and consult with others. In this way he was able to offer sound counsel and guidance to those who turned to him for doctrinal, disciplinary, or canonical support. May the Lord grant him eternal rest, and I ask all of you to pray for him. I ask prayers especially from the community of the Colonia Dolores where Father Segura served as a true pastor—he had so many admirable qualities.

Another notice is that today the universal church celebrates World Communications Day. Unfortunately, there has been little publicity about this event, but let me say a few words to make all Catholics mindful of the importance of using the media of social communication in a critical and conscientious way. Through these marvelous means of communication—such as newspapers, radio, television, cinema—many ideas are communicated to large numbers of people, but often the media serve as tools of confusion. These instruments, as creators of public opinion, are often manipulated by materialist interests and are used to maintain an unjust state of affairs through falsehood and confusion. There is a lack of respect for one of the most sacred rights of the human person, the right to be well informed, the right to the truth. Each person must defend this right for himself or herself by using the media critically. Not everything in the newspapers, not everything in the movies or on television, not everything that is heard on the radio is true. Often it is just the opposite, a lie.

That is why critical people must know how to filter the media to avoid being poisoned with whatever falls into their hands. This is the type of awareness that the church wants to awaken today as we celebrate World Communications Day. We want people to read the newspapers critically and be able to say, «This is a lie! This is not the same thing that was said yesterday! This is a distortion because I have seen the opposite stated!» Being critical is a vital characteristic in our day, and because the church attempts to implant this critical awareness, she is facing some very serious conflicts. The reason is that the dominant interests want to keep people half-asleep. They do not want people who are critical and know how to discern between truth and falsehood. I believe that never before has there existed in the world, especially in a setting like ours, such a struggle—a struggle unto death—between the truth and the lie. The conflict at this time can be reduced to this: either truth or lies. Let us not forget that great saying of Christ: «The truth will set you free» (John 8:32). Let us always seek the truth!

There is a saying of Saint Augustine that I believe is very appropriate for these times: *Libenter credimus quod credere volumus*, which means, «We gladly believe what we want to

believe». That is why it is so difficult to believe the truth: often we don't want to believe the truth because it disturbs our conscience. But even though the truth may disturb us, we must accept it, and we must want to believe in it so that the Lord will always bless us with the freedom of those who love the truth. We should not be among those who sell the truth or their pens or their voices or their media to the highest bidder or to materialist interests. How sad it is to see so many pens being sold, so many tongues being fed through the slanderous words broadcast on the radio. Often the truth produces not money but only bitterness, yet it is better to be free in the truth than to have great wealth in mendacity.

The life of the church

The celebration of Seminary Day is approaching, and next Sunday, Pentecost, will be a day for our young people. We have already announced that this Saturday at 8:00 o'clock we will have the ceremony of confirmation of young people here in the cathedral. There are already some two hundred young men and women who are preparing with wonderful spirit to receive this sacrament of the Holy Spirit. I invite all the people of God to renew this sacrament that we received as young children. We may not have been aware at that time that this gift of the Holy Spirit brings with it great responsibility and strength. Therefore, those of us who already received this sacrament will renew our commitment to defend our religion—that is why we are confirmed. These two hundred young men and women will give us an example of how people should prepare to receive such an important sacrament. For this reason we have stated that starting in Advent, that is next December, the sacrament of confirmation will no longer be given to people under the age of fifteen. We want those receiving this sacrament to do so with full awareness so that they can respond to this singular grace.

I'm happy to announce that beginning this Sunday, the first Sunday of May, at twelve noon we will pray the *Angelus* on the radio. I invite you to tune your radios at twelve noon exactly to YSAX, the Pan American Voice, so that together with your pastor and united with the Holy Father, who prays the *Angelus* in Rome every Sunday at noon, we may intone that greeting to the Virgin as we pray for the many needs of the church. Especially during the month of May, true Catholics ought to be characterized by this devotion to the mother of the church.

Thursday of this week, May 11, marks the one-year anniversary of the death of Father Alfonso Navarro and Luisito Torres in the rectory of Miramonte, where they were cruelly felled by bullets. To mark the anniversary we are preparing a concelebration that will take place here in the cathedral on Thursday at noon. Since May 3 a novena of Masses is being celebrated with much enthusiasm by the diverse communities of the capital; the Masses are celebrated every night at 7:00 o'clock in the church of Colonia Miramonte.

In this regard, I also take great delight in announcing to you that a ninety-two-page booklet has been published with the title *Testimony*¹. It contains a very interesting biographical sketch of the spirit which animated the priestly life of this young man, Alfonso Navarro, who died when his priesthood was in full blossom. I invite you to learn about his actual life in these pages because his case is similar to Father Grande's, and there is much interest in discrediting the priestly ministry of these two true martyrs. For that is what martyr means: one who has been killed out of hatred for the faith. There is no doubt that these two priests were laid low by criminal bullets because they had the courage to preach the truth and point out the sins of the

¹ *Testimonio, Alfonso Navarro*, Publicación Búsqueda, Arzobispado de San Salvador, 1978.

world. Another interesting booklet² has also been published about Father Grande. It is being printed in installments in the pages of *La Crónica del Pueblo*, a courageous newspaper that is honoring Father Grande by publishing the life of this true apostle of our archdiocese.

I want to tell you that it was a great joy for me to be able to spend all day yesterday with the parish community of La Palma in the department of Chalatenango. I'm grateful for the truly enjoyable time I spent with this renewed community that is eager to know the thinking of God as found in the Bible and to make this teaching a part of their lives. The church and the area surrounding the church were overflowing with people. Someone told me, «Look, these people have come from far away, and they didn't come in trucks. They came on their own, and they are very happy to spend the day here. They will keep this vigil until very late at night. If you are able, please remain here for the vigil»—unfortunately, I couldn't stay, but they told me, «More communities are coming still, and we will sing our own devout hymns that are inspired by the present reality of the pilgrim church here in these scenic pine-covered heights of La Palma in northern Chalatenango».

I also want to congratulate Bishop Luis Chávez y González who has been honored by our legislative assembly—and here I cite the text of the official statement—«as a meritorious citizen of the Republic of El Salvador because of the outstanding services that he has given to the country». How can we help but rejoice in the triumph of a brother, especially a predecessor for whom I have such great respect and admiration! And precisely because I have such great love and admiration for him, I would have preferred this homage to him to have been made with purer intentions. What is hidden beneath this title? I would have preferred an honor that had more logical antecedents, because I personally witnessed the tears and the sufferings of his final days as archbishop. He even told me, «Come quickly and take charge because this is a terrible situation!» Priests were being expelled from the country, and no one would answer his phone calls. The final days of his time as archbishop were very painful. For this reason, I believe that the honor that is now bestowed upon him lacks sincerity if it is not a true act of reparation, that is, if it does not lead to the changes demanded by this man who spoke with great courage about the social situation of our country. Since the legislative assembly has given such approval to Archbishop Chavez, our Catholic radio station has begun to transmit the teaching and the pastoral guidelines he laid down. These same guidelines were harshly criticized in the past but are still the principles we are following, a rich inheritance that I will try to preserve and cultivate. Therefore, in declaring him a «meritorious citizen», the legislature has also canonized his way of proceeding, his teaching, and his pastoral guidelines; in effect, our own path is ratified since it continues to be the same as the one that he left us.

I also believe that it would be logical for the national assembly to expedite, for the sake of the poor and the suffering, the amnesty requested by a group of lawyers and to rescind the Law of Public Order, which is being used to authorize many abuses. This law is not in accord with what Archbishop Chávez stands for. Now that this great pastor of our archdiocese is brought to public attention again, it would be good for the assembly to remember that what caused his sufferings is still a reality and that calling him a meritorious citizen should mean eliminating those conditions that condemn so many citizens, his brothers and sisters, to suffer marginalization and other abuses.

² *Rutilio Grande, Martyr of Rural Evangelization for El Salvador*, UCA Editores, San Salvador, 1978.

Within this historical setting of our church and of our society, let us now see Christ in this glorious triumph that is called the ascension. I call my homily today «The Hour of Glorification». Yes, today is the hour of Christ's glorification. On Holy Thursday, a short time before he died, Christ prayed, «I glorified you on earth, Father, by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. Now glorify me with you, Father, with the glory that I had with you before the world began» (John 17:4-5). On Holy Thursday night Christ felt that the hour of his glorification had arrived. For Christ the fullness of his glorification is both the humiliating suffering that led him to the cross and the glorious resurrection that led him to be seated at the right hand of the Father. What emerges from the sorrowful tomb and the humiliating cross is the Easter event, which comes to full flower in resplendent glory. Christians cannot forget that the glory of Christ is based on a sorrowful event, the cross. That is why the church's suffering and the pain of Christians always have a perspective of glory and hope. Let us not forget this. In light of today's readings I want to highlight three aspects of this glorification: first, Christ is the glorification of God; second, Christ is the glorification of humankind; and third, Christ is the glorification of the universe. In this way the Lord's ascension is presented in a perspective that is beautiful, profound, and universal.

Christ is the glorification of God

Let us look at him. Let us never tire of contemplating the figure presented to us in the gospel. When Jesus appears to his disciples, he tells them, «All power in heaven and on earth is given to me» (Matt 28:18). Today's first reading also describes this glorious moment in Christ's life: «As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight» (Acts 1:9). This is the panorama we should not lose sight of all day today. Let us contemplate this vision, sisters and brothers! If we did nothing else but fix our gaze, as the apostles did, on Jesus ascending while saying, «All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me», until he is seated at the right hand of the Father, then this Sunday would mark our lives as a time of contemplation. There is nothing more beautiful than the glorified Christ. There is no more noble thought for the human mind, no more noble love for the human heart than the thought and the love that tend toward this Son of Man in whom God dwells in all his fullness.

First of all I want to tell you that this Christ who ascends into heaven is the glory of the Father, the glory of God, the glory of the Holy Spirit. That is why the second reading, in which Saint Paul analyzes this glorification of Christ, invites us to pray, «Ask God to give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him» (Eph 1:17). Sisters and brothers, I tell you this morning with complete confidence that what I most ask of God in my poor prayer and what I ask of my people when they tell me they pray for me is simply that I become an instrument of this revelation. I do not want to preach anything else but this knowledge of Christ our Lord. If with this knowledge of Christ I try to shed light on the realities of my country, I do so knowing that what is primary is not our pilgrimage on earth but the vision of Christ. Yes, this vision must illuminate our pilgrimage, but we should never lose sight of the vision. Once again I offer counsel to my beloved radio audience, especially those listeners who are trying to trap me and to see where I will stumble—I ask you to take notice that the main thrust of my preaching is the revelation of Christ. This is my duty: preaching Christ. Like Saint Paul I pray for you, «that you be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him so that you may know the surpassing greatness of his power which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him in the heavens and putting all things beneath his feet» (Eph 1:17-20).

In Christ God is glorified. We will never have a good idea of Christ as long as we do not understand that he incarnated the relationship with the heavenly Father and that we must do what he did: pray often, give thanks to the Father, and make all that we have depend on the Father. This is the great revelation that Christ brought: teaching us how to relate to God. Therefore, when the culminating moment arrived, when his whole life of poverty and sacrifice was done, God glorified him, raised him to new life, and seated him at his right hand. «To sit at the right hand» is a biblical expression that shows that someone participates intimately in the power of God (Eph 1:20). Thus we see that God is glorified in Christ, just as he prayed at the Last Supper, «I have glorified you, Father. Now give me the same glory that I had with you before the world began» (John 17:5). Before the world was created, Christ existed as God. He began to live as man in the womb of a woman, in the Virgin. But as Saint John says in his prologue, «In the beginning was the Word» (John 1:1); the past imperfect tells us that he existed eternally: he was already living in the bosom of God, glorified in God. If out of love for humankind Christ clothed himself as a human person, what he does in the ascension is to glorify this humanity. This body and this soul, created at the time of the incarnation in the womb of the Virgin of Nazareth, is what is now clothed in the glory of the Son who is living in eternity. «Glorify me, Father, with the glory that I had with you before the world began» (John 17:5). All that splendor of eternity clothes the body and soul of Christ with glory. There in heaven, at the right hand of the Father, sharing the power of God, is a man with hands like ours, with a head like ours, who thinks like us, a glorified man—this is the mystery of the ascension.

In this man God has revealed his power. The power of God is to see Christ crucified; it is the power of love. As he comes forth from the tomb and overcomes his enemies, it is the power of God that overcomes. As Christ ascends into the heavens, God glorifies him and makes him the depository of all God's power. Christ is the glory of the Father. Christ is the glory of the Divinity. He is the man who possesses the treasures of God.

If I do no more than preach these words, sisters and brothers, what need do I have to seek out the trivialities of earth? Why should the church be seeking rivalries with earthly powers or worldly wealth if we already possess him who existed before all human beings and all other creatures, if we possess him who reveals the power of God? Those who do not understand Christ can never become a voice of liberation, nor can they feel the greatness which all people should feel in comparison to the trivialities of earth. This is Christ: the glory of the Father, the glory of God who is reflected in him. That is why Saint Paul asks the Lord to give his Christians the grace to know him and to know the power with which God has revealed his wonderful works in our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:17).

Therefore, that God who has plans of love and salvation for humankind wants the histories of the world's peoples to coincide with his history of salvation. They are not the same thing, but the history of salvation can still be injected into the history of every people. By the saving power revealed in Christ, God wants to save the people of all nations so that they live a history that is free from sin.

This is seen in today's first reading, where the apostles approach Christ and ask him a rather impudent question: «Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?» Christ responds, «It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses» (Acts 1:6-8). In other words, there are two histories: the history of God, which does not coincide with human dates and calculations, and the history of

humankind, which should be concerned about believing in God and inserting itself into the history of salvation. Despite the darkness of our own history, God has his history, and he will make his glory shine through the thick clouds of our nation's history.

The saving plan of God does not coincide neatly with our concerns. God will save those who hope in him, those who surrender themselves to his plans, those who love Christ without being worried about dates and hours and projects and the politics that humans devise. Nevertheless, it is true that Christian politicians, Christian sociologists, and Christian technicians should be concerned about making the politics of the nation, the history of the nation, and the technology of its soil coincide with the great plan of God so that our Salvadoran reality is lifted into the divine realm and our history receives the power of salvation. There will be no salvation for Salvadorans unless they place their faith and their hope in the One who is the Lord of history, the One who is the key of salvation for all our problems.

That is why the Second Vatican Council says that we should not confuse temporal progress with the growth of the kingdom of God (GS 39). That is true. Temporal progress is one thing, and indeed there are beautiful buildings in San Salvador; our nation has good highways, airports, etc. But do we take time to consider whether all of this progress coincides with the kingdom of God? The more progress a people makes humanly, the more disposed it is to be saved by God. Therefore, as long as there is a huge breach between the people's material progress and God's plan to save the world, we are not doing what God desires. There is much progress, yes, but there is little morality. We forget that humanity and God are the essence of progress.

We could say many more things about Christ, the glory of God, but I want to pass on to the second aspect of this glorification of Christ.

Christ is the glorification of humankind

Christ is the glorification of humankind. The prayer in today's Mass expresses this idea, which is better said in Latin: *Quo progesit gloria capit, eo spes vocatur et corporis*—«the members of the body are called to attain in hope as much glory as the head has already reached». It's as if the head has already entered into glory and is hauling all his members, all his Christians, along behind him. Christ ascended into heaven not only so that he would be glorified but also so that everybody else would be glorified in him. If those who die are friends of Christ, united to his grace and his truth, incorporated into him, then their heaven is secure. The ascension has not ended; every time that a Christian dies, there is an ascension.

This morning a great collaborator of the church has died in San Miguel, Choncita Asturias. I ask you to pray for her, a humble member of the people of God, but I know that she on this Sunday of the ascension is now glorified in Christ. And concerning Father Segura, as I said during the Mass last Monday, the hour of Christ's glorification has not ended, because every time a person like Father Segura dies, we see the glorification of Christ—a human being is glorified with the glory of him who ascended into the heavens.

But even as he summons us in hope to heaven, Christ remains with us. The head is the life of the body and the foot, and even though the foot is planted on the ground, it shares the same life as the head. This ought to fill us with joy; while our Head has ascended into heaven, we who are his feet continue our pilgrimage on earth, feeling the presence of Christ within us. I

see this reflected in today's readings and therefore say to you: the presence of Christ has been transformed. The apostles no longer see him with the same physical appearance that enabled them to touch him, to eat with him, and to recognize his glance and his stride. They have not left us even with a portrait of Christ. What did he look like? We do not know. But perhaps it is providential that we know nothing about his physical appearance because on this day of the ascension Christ transforms his presence in the world. He is no longer physically present but is present in a way we might call mystical. The church is called the Mystical Body of Christ because he lives here, in us.

Today's gospel repeats the words of Christ: «Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age» (Matt 28:20). What a great consolation! «I am with you!» Once a young person asked me, «But where is he? I want to see him» I told this person, «You do see him. He is the church; he is the preacher; he is the confessor who absolves you of your sins; he is the hand of the priest who baptizes; he is the word of good counsel; he is the presence of Christians; he is the people at Mass». Christ is here in the cathedral and in all the communities where faith unites Christians around the altar. Christ is present in the host that I will raise up for us to adore. «I am with you always, until the end of the age».

And there is something else, a still more beautiful reality. How is this mystical presence of Christ felt here on earth? I urge you all to read carefully this week the second reading from Saint Paul, especially verses 17 to 19, where Saint Paul asks God to give knowledge of the faith to Christians so that they might know—take note of these words— «what is the hope to which he has called them, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power» (Eph 1:18-19).

We no longer see Christ physically walking on this earth, but Christ is still walking. His presence among us is all of this: hope, riches of glory, and greatness of power. That is why the church walks confidently. The church does not rely on the powers of earth or on the wealth of people; she relies on Christ who is her hope, the riches of her glory, and the greatness of her power.

Christ lives here, not with his physical presence limited to a small village in Palestine. Christ lives now in every hamlet, in every town, in every family where there is a heart that has placed its trust in him, where there is an afflicted soul who hopes the hour of pain will pass, where there is a person tortured. He is present even in the prison, in the heart of those who hope and pray. Christ is present now in a much more vital way than when he walked the earth for thirty-three years among us. Christ is alive in the church, sisters and brothers; glorified at the right hand of the Father, he is present as the strength and the hope of this pilgrim people on earth. This is the glorification of humankind in Christ. What tribulation, then, can there be for this Christ, for us who are the Christ of history?

I also see this presence, sisters and brothers, and my heart is filled with emotion as I recall experiencing it among you. Today's first reading tells us that the angels came down to warn the apostles who were standing there in ecstasy contemplating Christ, who had been taken away in a cloud. As the great Spanish poet, Fray Luis de Granada,³ put it: «The envious cloud snatched away the beauty of Christ from the eyes of men». We will no longer see him, but

³ The verses to which Archbishop Romero refers are actually from Fray Luis de León, whose poem *En la Ascención* ends with these words: «Ah, envious cloud, jealous even of this brief delight. What is your complaint? Where do you go in such a hurry? How rich you are as you leave! How poor, how blind, you leave us!»

still, the angels uttered a great saying as a new stage of history began: «Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return» (Acts 1:11).

He will return! These beautiful words inspire the whole mystique of hope! The church is on pilgrimage toward encounter with the Lord. He will return! The church knows that he will return, but not to suffer or be humiliated. He will return as the judge of history. He will return and fulfill the hope of all who trusted in him. He will return full of love to embrace with eternal love those who lived loving him. It is worthwhile being Christian because Christ will return!

With the ascension of the Lord the final phase of history has been inaugurated, and we have been in it now for twenty centuries. The first Christians thought that Christ's final return—the *parousia* they called it—was imminent, and Saint Paul had to correct them. He told them that no one knows when the Lord will return; centuries may pass (1 Thess 5:1-2). Still, it is certain that the end of the world has already begun. From the moment Christ ascended into heaven and left his disciples with hope for his return, history has been in its final stage, the definitive phase, the hour of the church. The church is charged with keeping this hope alive in people. That is why in a short while, there before the consecrated host, we will utter the words of those who hope: «Come, Lord Jesus!» The church is the beloved who awaits her returning Spouse so that they may finally embrace and live together with a joy that will never end. That is where our pilgrim church is tending, sisters and brothers. Thus I come to my final consideration about the glorified Christ.

Christ glorifies the universe

Christ glorifies the universe because, as the final verses in the reading from Saint Paul tell us, God displayed his power in Christ, «seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come» (Eph 1:20-21). This means, sisters and brothers, that Christ is the key not only for all of history but for the whole universe. «Everything that exists was created by him and for him» (Col 1:16). Let us never forget that Christ is the ultimate explanation of all that exists. That is why the redemption that Christ brought about not only saved humankind from sin but also saved from the slavery of sin the whole of creation, which, as Saint Paul says, «is groaning in labor pains even until now» (Rom 8:22).

Money is good, but selfish people have made it evil and sinful. Power is good, but abuse by humans has made it something fearful. All has been created by God, but humans have subjected it to sin. That is why Christ's ascension proclaims that the whole creation will also be redeemed in him; he will give meaning to all that God has created. And at the end of time, the time of the final judgment, there will be the great adjudication of good and evil. Christ will place at God's feet both the evil that is to be eliminated definitively and the good that is to be taken up into the eternal glorification of Christ. In this way the Lord's ascension also marks the glorification of the universe.

The universe rejoices; wealth rejoices; power rejoices; all material things like farms and estates rejoice. Everything rejoices because the day is coming when the supreme Judge will redeem all that God has created from sin, from slavery, from shame, even though humans are now using creation to commit sin and to offend their sisters and brothers. Redemption is

already decreed, and in his power God has raised up Christ our Lord. And this presence of Christ ascended into heaven is a witness to the end-time justice.

Finally, sisters and brothers, this glorification of God, of humankind, and of the universe that was accomplished in Christ has been entrusted to his church. That is why Saint Paul tells us at the end of today's reading, «He gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way» (Eph 1:22-23).

The church is like the fullness of Christ. We are making Christ present because we are his church. We might say that his church is the zone where the glory of Christ, which is also the glory of God and the glory of humankind and the glory of the world, is being made real at this present time. The church may not hold the most prominent place in the universe; she may be only a tiny detail in history, but the people of God that Christ has constituted through baptism forms the depository of the glory of Christ, and that is why the church preaches the kingdom of God as present on this earth. It does so, dear brothers and sisters, because you and I are people of history with our feet planted on the dust of the earth. We suffer because of our social, political, and economic situations, but we are the concrete creation that Christ is saving in his church, and the church must preach this kingdom of God, this glorification of Christ now being realized in history and in this world.

So as we conclude these reflections, I urge you to entertain in your hearts a magnanimous thought: let us collaborate with Christ in making a better world! Let us make the progress of our nation a pedestal of the glory of creation by making it more Christian. Let us work with a Christian spirit! Let us love one another and build a society founded on peace and grounded in justice, the society that God desires and our faith will now proclaim. Let us stand and proclaim our belief in God and in Christ.