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THE DIVINE SAVIOUR, THE BREAD WHO COMES DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND GIVES LIFE TO THE WORLD

Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

5 August 1979

Exodus 16:2-4,12-15

Ephesians 4:17,20-24

John 6:24-35

Dear sisters and brothers, as our patronal feast of the Divine Savior draws near, we find our church situated «amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God», which the Council says are signs of the church's authenticity (LG 8). This afternoon we will have the traditional *Bajada* at four o'clock. May it be an opportunity for the people to pay homage to the Divine Savior and to express their hope in him. Tomorrow at eight o'clock in front of the cathedral we will celebrate our solemn feast-day Mass with the participation of all the communities of the archdiocese and all the clergy. I want to thank Bishop Chávez for the wonderful telegram he sent from his hometown, El Rosario in Cuscatlán: «Spiritually united, I will accompany you during the solemnities of the Divine Savior».

Life of the church

There are many consolations from God on this feast of the Divine Savior, but there are also bitter proofs of the world's persecutions. I want today's Mass to be a gesture of solidarity with our sister diocese of San Vicente, which is grieving because yesterday morning gunmen killed Father Alirio Napoleón Macías, the pastor of San Esteban Catarina. He happened to be cleaning the altar and the church, as any good priest does, when he became aware that those who were going to kill him were there in front of the church. The people claim that the priest shouted out, «Be careful, they're agents!» A little later, after pretending they wanted to talk with the priest, they fired their arms inside the church, and he fell wounded between the sacristy and the altar. His beloved mother ran in anguish to the church; she said she saw him open his eyes, but then two gushes of blood came from his nose and he died. The church as a mother weeps with that mother over the corpse. But she also sternly calls the murderers to conversion and imposes excommunication once again upon those who were physically and intellectually responsible for this new sacrilege that stains our nation.

Yesterday I went to offer prayers before his body, and I now invite our beloved fellow priests and all the communities of the archdiocese to the funeral at four o'clock tomorrow. Let us show our solidarity with that diocese and that parish by attending the funeral services, which will be tomorrow, Monday, August 6, at four o'clock in the afternoon in the parish church of San Esteban Catarina, where he will be buried. Father Macías was always in solidarity with our archdiocese. He always joined with us at the funerals of our priests who were killed and at other difficult moments, and he also took part in the vital events of our archdiocese. It is only right, then, that tomorrow the archdiocese give a response of gratitude

and solidarity. Let us repudiate this criminal violence and give consolation to his family and his parish even as we strengthen our own faith and hope.

In fact, last week's *Orientación* published a statement in which Father Macías, as a good pastor, defended his parish and denounced the continual raids and murders perpetrated by the security forces¹. He said that in less than two months there had been at least three military operations in that zone of San Esteban Catarina. Several persons were captured and later appeared murdered. He mentioned the names of José Angel Realigeño, Pedro Juan Valladares, Jeremías Jovel, Jorge Osorio, Timoteo Rivas, Victor Manuel Arévalo, and Santos Bonilla. He also denounced the capture of several persons who have disappeared: Manuel Iraheta, Mercedes Palacios, Mario Palacios, and Pedro Juan Alvarado. He also said that other persons in his parish were still receiving death threats. He considered all this not just dangerous but tragic.

Also in solidarity with that diocese of San Vicente, we want to denounce the threats made against twenty-one persons in San Sebastián, twelve of whom are teachers: Carlos Octavio Escobar Burgos, Ricardo Antonio Ventura, Rosa Alfaro de Abarca, Ana María de Moreira, Florencio Adalberto Rivas, Juan Alberto Argueta, Luis Emerson Durán, Marta Ramos de Blanco, Adán de Jesús Abarca, Napoleón Burgos, Eleodoro Burgos, Ismael Fabricio Barrera, Fernando Moreira, Octavio Burgos Jovel, Carlos Alberto Gutiérrez, Francisco Alfaro, Rafael Flores, Manuel Rosales Cubás, Evaristo Burgos, Abelardo Burgos, and Ramón Carrillo. All these persons have been given death threats by the fateful shield of the UGB.

Also in San Martín, Father Rutilio Sánchez has felt the threat of death very near at hand. The people murmur, «It's the same ones». What is the meaning of all this? All the signs say that, if the government wanted to, it could easily put a stop to this absurd tragedy being perpetrated by phantom groups and thus prevent the terrible bloodshed and lawlessness affecting so many homes.

In making this denunciation, we are encouraged by the pope's gesture of asking prayers for the priests, the sisters, and the fifty other persons who were kidnapped from the Marymount mission in Rhodesia². The pope has also requested protection and assistance for the refugees from Indochina. The world is suffering from sinful persecutions.

Our celebration of the Divine Savior is also marked this week by the occupation of two cathedrals: the one in San Miguel and the one in San Salvador. The occupations have been carried out by the February 28 People's Leagues with the intention of denouncing the capture of five of their members. They are asking for their release and for the removal of Sergeant Mata from the town of Perquín. They have already obtained the release of those arrested. It's regrettable that in order to denounce this injustice they have to occupy churches and cathedrals, even though it is really a sign of honor for the cathedral, where the voice of justice is found. (Applause) Cardinal Mindszenty used to say of the churches in Hungary during the communist persecution: «If one day we're unable to sing the national anthem in the streets, there are always the cathedrals where the free voice of patriotism and freedom can resound». Still, we would like to tell the organizations to respect the main purpose of the churches so as not to make themselves odious to the people. We thank God that there is respect for the

¹ «Stop the Repression in San Esteban Catarina» in *Orientación* (5 August 1979).

² JOHN PAUL II, «Allocution», 29 July 1979, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (31 July 1979).

people's fervor on this August 6, for here we have the cathedral open again so that we can pay homage to our Divine Patron.

I also want to second the clarification that Father Octavio Cruz made in a letter sent to *La Prensa Gráfica*. There was no truth in the news published by that paper about the flag of the FPL flying over the church of Aguilares; it was simply an attempt to cause scandal³. The priest declared, «That is false; no flag has been raised over our church», and asked that the matter be clarified. Thank God, the paper paid honor to the truth and published a retraction⁴. We always need to be very careful with the newspapers. I remind you once again that we should know how to read them critically because not everything the papers say is the truth, and often what is published in their pages is very tendentious.

Our diocese also denounces the obstacles that have been put in the way of the work of Caritas, particularly in Aguilares and in Tejutla, in the districts of El Salitre and Los Martínez. The distributions and the activities of the archdiocesan Caritas are being hampered by ORDEN.

This morning the Apostleship of Prayer will be meeting in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart under the direction of Father Santiago Garrido to analyze their work of the past year and plan for the coming year. The Apostleship of Prayer is a lovely ministry which seeks to convert all our sufferings and trials and other circumstances of life into prayer. I call upon all Christians not to lose the merits of their daily lives but rather to unite them with the Heart of Jesus so as to convert them into salvation for the world. If you want to find out more, there will be new orientation sessions in the basilica this morning.

Last Monday in the church of El Calvario in Santa Tecla, the faithful celebrated the forty-day memorial of the death of Father Palacios. It was a very devout ceremony of atonement which sought the true meaning of these crimes: there is the sin that kills, and there is the love for God that gives life.

That is how our diocese progresses amid the joys of God and the persecutions of the world. The message for this diocese is illuminated on this day by the jubilant light of the Divine Savior; it is the message of life and liberty. Today in chapter six of Saint John, Christ continues his instruction to the people. The multiplication of the loaves has a profound meaning, and during these four Sundays (today is the second) we're going to have the opportunity to learn about the very thoughts of Christ through the rich symbol of bread. The verses that the church has read for us today give us the title of our homily: «The Divine Savior, Bread that Comes Down from Heaven and Gives Life to the World».

I would like to meditate on those words of Christ—«bread that comes down» — in order to give liturgical and evangelical meaning to this afternoon's traditional *Bajada*⁵. We should not go to the *Bajada* just out of custom, no matter how pious it may appear. Let us give it meaning through a profound reflection. Christ could be explaining the *Bajada* in today's gospel when he says, «I am the bread that comes down from heaven for the life of the world»

³ *La Prensa Gráfica* (31 July 1979).

⁴ *La Prensa Gráfica* (2 August 1979).

⁵ *Bajada* in Spanish means «coming down» or «bringing down». In this context it refers to the procession in which the image of the Divine Savior is transferred from one site to another.

(John 6:51) Thus I will develop my thought in this way: first, hunger as a sign of oppression and death; second, bread as a sign of liberation and life; and third, Christ as the true bread of life.

Hunger as a sign of oppression and death

Hunger is the first sign in chapter six. There was a hungry multitude of five thousand men, not counting women and children, and Christ, feeling the pangs of those empty stomachs, gave them food. This was the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. The next day the crowd, excited by the Redeemer's miraculous gesture, looked for him on the other side of the lake, where he had fled because they wanted to make him king. They asked him, «Master, when did you get here?» (John 6:25) And his reply is what we find in today's gospel: «You are looking for me to get bread that perishes. Seek rather the bread that does not perish, the bread that gives eternal life» (John 6:26-27). Christ then began to explain to them that the bread that fills the stomach is not the solution.

Hunger is a sign of much deeper kinds of oppression. Remember the occasion when Christ himself was in the desert. The tempter, playing on his hunger, proposed to him three sinful ways to escape from hunger: tempting God by changing stones into bread; displaying vanity by throwing himself from the pinnacle of the temple to be caught by angels; and worse still, worshiping the power displayed in the great kingdoms of the world. «All this I will give you if you bow down and worship me!» (Matt 4:1-11). How terrible is hunger! It leads to what Medellín calls «the temptations of desperation» (M 2,17). Is this perhaps not an explanation, dear sisters and brothers, for all the manifestations of violence we see?

In his exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI described the horrible spectacle of hunger as reported to him by countless bishops from all the continents. He said the bishops spoke «with a pastoral accent resonant with the voice of the millions of sons and daughters of the church who make up those peoples. Peoples, as we know, engaged with all their energy in the effort and struggle to overcome everything which condemns them to remain on the margin of life: famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism sometimes as cruel as the old political colonialism. The church has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, many of whom are her own children. She has the duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. This is not foreign to evangelization» (EN 30). These are the pope's words.

Events of the week

The same reality of hunger describes the situation of our country this week. There is hunger for justice, for Christ spoke of «those who hunger and thirst for justice» (Matt 5:6). How can there not be hunger for justice when three bodies were found there in La Libertad, near the beaches in the district of El Sunzal? One of the three was a woman, decapitated. How can there not be hunger for justice when during the month of July thirty-eight persons were arrested, of whom three were killed and twenty-eight continue to be held with no information provided about them? Only four have been released.

Hunger for peace and justice is precisely what was expressed in the letter that was sent to the president of the Supreme Court of Justice asking for information on the whereabouts of Santos Ortiz Ascensio. The same hunger was expressed in the letter addressed

to the president of the republic by the mother of Carlos Antonio Mendoza Valencia, who was arrested by security agents on June 28. Appealing as a mother in anguish to the human sentiments of the president, she begged him to investigate the whereabouts of her son. There is also the letter sent by the family of Miguel Ángel Terezón Ramos. I also received a letter asking for help in finding three loved ones who were arrested together, a father and two sons: Francisco Hernández Hernández, Francisco Pérez Hernández, and Julio César Pérez Hernández.

Another instance of the hunger for justice symbolized by the hunger of today's gospel is the case of two men seeking asylum: Juan Bautista Rodríguez Corvera and Federico Corvera. Suffering persecution for political motives, they are seeking safe conduct that will allow them to leave their own country. Sadly, this is often the only way some people can breathe the air of confidence and justice which cannot be found in our own land.

There is also hunger for justice in the labor conflicts, some of which, thanks be to God, are being resolved. But there are still some incomprehensible complications, such as the conflicts in Pan Lido, IMES, and the Fabril de Aceites.

There is also hunger for justice in people whose sons and daughters live in exile. We are filled with hope by the president's promises when he says there will be free elections and that exiles can return whenever they want⁶. Nevertheless, the hunger continues when we consider that what is most important is not the elections themselves but the environment needed for free elections. We need a guarantee that human rights will be respected. (Applause) It's ridiculous to talk about freedom of political expression at the very time when there's a wave of murderous repression. How can poor *campesinos* feel confident about voting freely when they have weapons over their heads? (Applause) With regard to those in exile, while it's true that we were delighted to see Doctor Morales Erlich return to our country, the church still laments the government's refusal to allow Father Ástor Ruiz and Father Juan Deplancke to return. It's either one thing or another: either the president is not sincere in what he says or his subordinates are not obeying him. (Applause)

Each one of you, dear sisters and brothers, can join your own particular anxieties to these political, social, and familial forms of hunger, and you will see how true it is that hunger is a symbol for all forms of misery, all forms of repression, and all forms of discontent.

Bread as a sign of liberation and life

Hunger synthesizes all these things, and that's why the Lord chose it, as we're told in this chapter six, to serve as a sign of something greater. My second thought, then, is that bread is the sign of liberation. But there are two ways of understanding liberation. There is temporal liberation, the bread that fills the stomach and immediately satisfies hunger, and there is integral liberation, because it's not enough to have plenty of bread if we're still not free.

Today's first reading, which tells us about the manna, also relates how the people Moses was trying to free spoke some tragic words. After Moses had freed the people from the oppression of Egypt, they began to feel hungry as they walked through the desert, and they sighed, «Why has he led us out? There in Egypt we had pots of food and onions, and we ate well. He has brought us out here to die». How sad is the lot of people who become accustomed

⁶ *La Prensa Gráfica* (1 August 1979).

to slavery! They prefer pots of onions to the sun of freedom. They don't want to endure the difficult journey through the desert. All liberation requires sacrifice. Let the people of Nicaragua tell us if this is not the case! (Applause) «Would that we had died at the Lord's hand in Egypt as we sat around our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread! But you have led us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!» (Exod 16:3). How difficult it is to lead a people when they have become accustomed to difficult situations!

When I was entering San Esteban Catarina yesterday, right after the crime was committed, I was noticing what I've noticed in many towns of my country: the people were distraught and fearful and couldn't even speak what they knew was true. Yes, of course people furtively say revealing things such as what I heard in San Esteban: «It's the same ones». Those are the things one hears, but nobody is able to swear by them. It is the fear of being freed! It's hard!

So also, after the multitude had been satisfied with the bread that fills the stomach, Christ our Lord told them clearly and frankly, «I tell you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate bread and were filled» (John 6:26). My sisters and brothers, how treasonous is the stomach! The bread of material forms of liberation is certainly necessary, but it is not enough!

I remember when Pope Paul VI visited the United Nations ten years ago and denounced the great sin of preventing so many beings from entering into life because they die in the womb of their mothers or are kept from being conceived. The pope spoke these immortal words: «The problem is not solved by suppressing life but by providing bread for all those invited into the banquet of life»⁷. In other words, the problems of sterilization and abortion are closely linked to our social problems because the bread that God gives us is sufficient for all who are invited to the banquet of life. However, since a few people have taken possession of all the bread on earth, many of those invited to the banquet of life are prohibited from entering because there is no bread for them.

This is the bread of which John Paul II spoke recently. I have here a magnificent discourse that the pope gave for those taking part in the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. The pope stated, «The divine command to master nature in the service of life of course implies that the reasonable improvement and use of natural resources should be directed towards attaining fundamental human aims. This is also in conformity with the basic principle that all the goods of the earth are meant to benefit all the members of the human family. Development undoubtedly demands bold transformations and innovations that go deep»⁸.

Also quite relevant to our situation here is the discourse the pope gave in Cuilapán, Mexico. Some people will claim that the pope is communist for saying what he did:

The depressed rural world, the workers who water their afflictions with their sweat, cannot wait any longer for full and effective recognition of their dignity, which is not inferior to that of any other social sector. They have the right to be respected and not to

⁷ PAUL VI, «Message to Humanity: Discourse before the General Assembly of the United Nations», 4 October 1965.

⁸ JOHN PAUL II, «Discourse to Participants in the World Congress for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development», 4 July 1979, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (29 August 1979).

be deprived of the little they have through maneuvers that are sometimes tantamount to real ruin. They have the right not to have their aspirations to improve themselves impeded. They have the right to be rid of the barriers of exploitation often constituted by intolerable selfishness against which their best efforts of advancement are shattered. They have the right to effective assistance—not just charity or crumbs of justice—so that they will have access to the kind of development that their dignity as human beings and children of God deserves. As we have already said, there is a social mortgage linked to the right of ownership of land. Because of this, let me invite you to give the highest consideration in your structural reforms to all those forms of agrarian contracts which favor the efficient use of land through the primary labor of the workers⁹.

The pope also says, «Agrarian reform and rural development demand that reforms be introduced which reduce the distances between the prosperity of the rich and the alarming needs of the poor»¹⁰.

It seems to me that this discourse of the pope, with its concern for the suffering of *campesinos*, supports the demands of the day-laborers with regard to salaries and other benefits, as these are presented by FECCAS and UTC¹¹. It is the very soul of our *campesinos* that is speaking; they are conscious of their harsh and hopeless situation since they possess no means of production that allows them to obtain the basic necessities for subsistence: rice, corn, and beans. As a consequence, they are obliged to sell their labor power for a miserable salary that doesn't provide even the minimum necessities of subsistence for themselves and their families.

Their petition statement includes items of basic justice such as these: «Equal payment regardless of sex or age in all that pertains to payrolls, elimination of the system of aggregate workers, and calculations based on collective contracts». I have personally seen on the farms what it means to be an «aggregate worker» or a «helper». It is unjust to give to only one worker the benefits that are due to all the workers on the payroll, but since the other workers are simply «aggregates», they are paid strictly according to their work, and sometimes they're even robbed of that payment by trickery.

The workers also ask that care be taken of the health of those who are responsible for spraying poison. And certainly they have other concerns, such as adequate housing, drinking water, and food to restore the workers' energy. And that is surely what the Ministry of Labor exists for, to assess the needs of some workers and the abilities of others, but we should keep in mind what the pope himself has stated with regard to the world of the *campesinos*, for it is there that the symbols of hunger and bread mentioned in today's gospel find their most eloquent application.

That is the bread Christ is analyzing. As the church has told us, petitions and contracts and demands for earthly things are not enough. All that is good, but it is insufficient. Christ says, «Do not work for the bread that perishes» (John 6:27). Do not work only for things that are here today and tomorrow get turned around. If there is no change of heart in those who today are suffering repression and persecution, then tomorrow they may become

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Orientación* (12 August 1979).

oppressors and repressors of others. So we need to find the true meaning that Christ wants to give to the symbol of bread.

In today's gospel Christ says, «The bread that saves people is not the bread that Moses gave, the manna» (John 6:32). God gave the people that bread so that they would understand that God was provident and would give them food to satisfy their physical hunger. Just as God was concerned about freeing the people from slavery in Egypt, so also God is concerned about promoting the just demands of the organizations that are seeking to defend the people's legitimate rights. God approves of unionization. God wants people to live united; he doesn't want people to be scattered. As the pope has said, God wants *campesinos* to be allowed to unite together with other *campesinos* and not to be scattered as a mass that is more easily exploited. God wants all those things, but they are not enough.

«The bread that I will give is the bread that gives life to the world. The bread of Moses and the bread I gave you yesterday in the multiplication of loaves does not bring immortality (John 6:51). Yesterday we ate, and today we are hungry again. We will eat and be satisfied, but all of us will still die. This bread does not give us immortality». The just demands of this earth cannot give us paradise. If people's struggles are disconnected from the faith which sheds light on what is beyond, then they remain reduced, curtailed, short-sighted, and highly imperfect. That is why the service the church provides to groups working for earthly causes is a service of enlightenment by the bread of life. It is the same service the church provides for politicians and sociologists even though her field of endeavor is different. The light of the bread of life tells politicians and those engaged in earthly struggles, «Don't expend all your forces on earthly things. Don't seek justice only to obtain the bread that fills the stomach. Seek rather the justice of the kingdom of God. Seek the bread which I am!»

We want to end our reflection by describing the goal of Christian liberation as proposed by Paul VI. Please pay special attention to a paragraph in *Populorum Progressio* that I'm going to read to you. One of the fathers of liberation theology, when he was explaining to us the nature of that theology, cited a paragraph that he said had inspired much of his theological reflections. In paragraph 20 of *Populorum Progressio* Paul VI says the following: «This is what will permit authentic human development, a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human» (PP 20). Here the pope is defining the meaning of development, but then he begins to describe it in terms of a ladder. There are the «less human conditions: the lack of material necessities for those who are without the minimum essential for life, and the moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness» (PP 21). Sisters and brothers, take note that this is a very good comparison. Those who are perhaps wealthy and have everything they need but are crushed by selfishness are just as underdeveloped as those who lack what they need to live. Both the rich and the poor in such a situation are on the same low level of human development: the poor do not have the minimum needed for physical life, and the rich do not have the minimum needed for moral life. Selfishness is the clearest sign of underdevelopment.

The pope goes on to describe other «less human conditions, such as the oppressive structures»—these are the pope's words—«the oppressive structures, whether these are due to the abuses of ownership or to the abuses of power, to the exploitation of workers or to unjust transactions». All these structures of exploitation keep people at a sub-human level, like the ones we described before. The pope then speaks about «conditions that are more human: the passage from misery toward the possession of necessities, victory over

social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture». Then, in another step up the ladder, the pope talks about «additional conditions that are more human: increased esteem for the dignity of others, the turning toward the spirit of poverty, cooperation for the common good, the will and desire for peace». Notice how the spirit of poverty is a path to development because true development does not consist in having more things but in learning to be master of what one has—that's the spirit of poverty. The pope then describes even greater human achievements, such as «the acknowledgement by men and women of supreme values and of God as their source and their finality». Notice that the summit of development is found in «what is finally most human of all: in faith, a gift of God accepted by human good will, and in unity in the love of Christ, who calls us all to share as children in the life of the living God, the Father of all» (PP 21). True human liberation terminates there, in communion with God, in the faith by which we know him, in the love by which we are united with him, in our conversation with God, in our communion with God. That is the ultimate summit of development and authentic liberation.

Christ as the true bread

That is the reason, sisters and brothers, why Christ says, «The bread of this earth is not enough to free you». We must discover in material bread what God really wants to give us, the gift of which the bread is only a sign. The symbolic bread spoken of today in the holy gospel is revealed for what it is when Christ says, «I am» (John 6:35). Listen to the sound of these words, which resemble the words God spoke to Moses in the burning bush: «I am. I am who I am» (Exod 3:14). Christ is. He is liberation. «I am the bread that comes down from heaven for the true life of men and women» (John 6:51).

Our work is to believe in him. That's what today's gospel says. When the Jews asked Christ, «What must we do to have this bread?» he replied, «This is the work that God requires: that you believe in the only one who can bring salvation» (John 6:28-29). No one who makes use of mere earthly forces can bring about the liberation that reaches the heights of putting us in communion with God.

Here on earth people can easily change structures by overthrowing governments, feeding the people, and breaking down prison bars. All of that must be done, but it is not enough! Human beings cannot do what Christ can do, which includes all of that *and* raising us up to God. The Divine Savior of the world, whose traditional image we will behold this afternoon, invites us to raise ourselves above earthly needs, to realize that he is the solution coming down from heaven, and to embrace him through hope, prayer, and love. That doesn't mean expecting everything of him. We must work as if everything depended on us, but we must hope in Christ as if everything depended on him. That is the balance of true development. And that's why Christ ends the gospel with the declaration, «I am». He is! Sisters and brothers, what a tremendous opportunity the gospel offers us to know more intimately the Divine Savior!

What will we receive as the fruit of this embrace of Christ to make him our own? We find it in today's second reading. Saint Paul describes for us the situation of those who were still enslaved by paganism. What he calls the «old man» is the hateful man, the violent man, the thievish man, the man of intrigues, the murderous man, the kidnapper, the crude man, the brutish man. These are the ones who bring such a plague upon us: the senseless men, the

bestial men, the men who prowl like wolves. (Applause) «That is what you were», says Saint Paul to those who have been converted from that way of life (Eph 4:22).

So on this sixth of August I would also like to tell those whose hands are stained with blood, especially the blood of priests or the blood of any human being: may you be converted! And I say to all those who are struggling for change: may you rise to those heights that the second reading today offers us when it says, «This is not how you learned Christ. Christ has taught you to abandon your former way life, the old nature corrupted by desire for pleasure and devoid of spirit. Be renewed in the Spirit! Allow the Spirit to refresh your mind. Clothe yourselves in the new human condition of justice and holiness, created in the image of God» (Eph 4:20-24). This is the new human being. Medellín tells us that changing structures will be no use at all if we don't have new men and women (M 1,3). The American continent will be renewed thanks to this Christ who renews human beings and arrays them with his justice and holiness.

Therefore, dear Christian brothers and sisters, you who have believed in Christ and truly want to follow him are the true hope for liberation in El Salvador. (Applause) And so I conclude by inviting you to celebrate the feast of the Divine Savior, especially this afternoon and tomorrow, by making this your true desire:

Lord, I don't want to be my old self. I don't want to be a hindrance to the progress of my country. Lord, keep far from me the gangs of Salvadoran killers. Lord, have mercy on all those who plan crimes and commit them. Lord, change the hearts of those who govern and those who are governed. Lord, change the heart of the nation, and renew us interiorly with justice and holiness. Give true understanding to those whom you've given the courage to struggle for a new nation and to fight for the just demands of the people. Help them not to waste their energy only on the bread that fills the stomach. Rather, raise them up to struggle to the death because when people die for the ideals of the kingdom of heaven, as did our priests and Father Macías—who is stretched out now there in San Esteban Catarina—then we think: these are the paths that we must follow. They die, but they continue to live! (Applause)