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BAPTISM, VOCATION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE DIVINE LIFE

**Fourth Sunday of Lent
5 March 1978**

Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

This season of Lent, sisters and brothers, continues on its pilgrimage and finds its meaning in Christ, who for forty days lived an extremely austere life. A very common symbol among our people is the Nazarene of the way of the cross: Christ carrying his cross. We follow him knowing that this Christ, whether fasting in the desert or forced to carry his cross to Calvary, is not some alien being that exists separated from us. He is God's love, and his omnipotence inspires him to share his life with us. The church prolongs Christ's life, and around the world Christians feel during Lent that they walk with Christ as he carries his cross. Thus we discover that our own history, our situation here in El Salvador, and our unique way of living out this history is not something separate from Christ. During Lent the people feel that they themselves are on the way of the cross. Consequently, as we explain the word of God, we cannot prescind from the historic reality of the way of the cross that our people are now experiencing.

The anniversaries of Rutilio Grande and the expulsion from the Plaza Libertad

This week we celebrate some very important anniversaries. Last Tuesday in the church of El Rosario there was a Mass for the dead in commemoration of the expulsion of people from the Plaza Libertad. This morning at 10:30 we will anticipate the anniversary of the assassination of Father Rutilio Grande and the two *campesinos* who died with him a year ago. Next Saturday the eleventh, at 12:00 o'clock here in the cathedral, there will be a celebration to remember Father Grande and other deceased whose anniversaries are in these days. The Mass this morning will take place at the site of Father Grande's grave in El Paisnal at around 10:30. Regarding these celebrations a clarification is necessary because the present circumstances can lead to much confusion, and there are people interested in taking advantage of the confusion in order to malign and distort the true mission of the church. I want to say three things about these anniversaries: first, the church's intention; second, the government's duty; and third, the duty of Christians.

When the church gathers people together to celebrate the anniversary of those who have died, her primary intention is to pray for the deceased. Those who have died need many prayers, and the church has organized these anniversaries as privileged days for prayer. Thus, the primary and very clear intention of the church is to pray for her dead. But the church also has another intention: to console those who mourn the loss of their loved ones. This is another pure objective of the church's religious and evangelical spirit: to comfort those who mourn for

the deceased. Third, the church also reflects and calls to conversion those who have been responsible for these assaults, murders, and deaths—those who have left the mourners in a situation of abandonment and pain.

Reflecting on this, we must not forget that one of the church's objectives involves the political order. The church does not seek political power, and her pastoral ministry is not based on political power. She does not enter into partisan politics, nor does she identify with any political party. But the church must speak her authoritative word when problems arise in the political order and «when the fundamental rights of the human person and the salvation of souls demand this» (GS 76). (All this is from the Council.) The church defends the human rights of every citizen, and she must give preference to the poorest members of society, the weak and the marginalized. She promotes the development of the human person; she is the critical conscience of society. The church must be society's critical conscience, and she must form the Christian conscience of believers and work for the cause of justice and peace.

A church that does not purposely pursue these objectives is not the true church of the Gospel. Pursuing these objectives does not mean meddling in politics but simply fulfilling her Gospel mission of bringing to light the moral duties of society and every person. Accordingly, sisters and brothers, I believe it is very providential, for both government and people, that the church enjoy complete freedom in carrying out this mission. The church seeks this freedom so that the people can breathe, so that they can sing with joy our national anthem, so that they can hear their legitimate aspirations echoed by their pastors. Thanks be to God, this is what our church is doing.

Therefore, it is very dangerous to tamper with this freedom of the church because in doing so another escape valve is closed, and the environment of repression becomes so strong and intense that people cannot tolerate it for long. That is why I want to thank and congratulate Father Alejandro Peinador, who took on this role for the church as he celebrated Mass in El Rosario and also defended the open door policy of the church. At this time we also want to demand justice for those who have been captured in these circumstances. Certainly they should not be tortured. Let them be brought to trial, if need be.

In these celebrations and anniversaries, therefore, let the role of the church be quite clear: she is the voice of human rights; she is the voice of the people's conscience; she is the prayer that reaches up toward God and reaches down to console the families who place their trust in her. That is why the freedom to believe, to love God, and to call on God as each person wishes is one of the most sacred rights of the human person.

Second, in these circumstances governments have a duty to respect and to facilitate the right to equality and participation. The words I am going to read now are not my own but are the words of Pope Paul VI in his letter *Octagesima Adveniens*; this encyclical was written on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* to update the social doctrine of Pope Leo XIII. Among other things, the pope makes this beautiful observation in paragraph 22: «Two aspirations persistently make themselves felt in these new [social] contexts, and they grow stronger to the extent that people become better informed and better educated: the aspiration to equality and the aspiration to participation, two forms of man's dignity and freedom» (OA 22). «It is not for the State or even for political parties, which are self-absorbed, to try to impose an ideology by means that would lead to a dictatorship over minds, the worst kind of all.... The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth,

and it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power». (OA 25) Thus far the words of Pope Paul VI.

As you can see, these are two signs of the times: the aspiration to equality and the aspiration of all citizens to participation in the common good. The pope says that «the government has the right and the obligation to channel these just aspirations and not impose some ideology that would lead to a dictatorship over minds». There is therefore an urgent need to remove the real roots of all violence and terrorism. There will always be unrest as long as people are unable to find legitimate channels for their reasonable aspirations to participate in the common good. Repression is not the road to travel; rather, these irrepressible aspirations of the people need to be channeled in positive ways.

Hence my third observation, sisters and brothers, concerns the duties of Christians. The documents of the Council, especially paragraph 73 of *Gaudium et Spes* and paragraph 14 of the decree on the activity of lay people like yourselves in the world (AA 14), speak about the political commitment of all Christians as a true field of our apostolate. Accordingly, no Christian should say, «I'm not getting involved. I'm not making a commitment», because that would mean being both a bad Christian and a bad citizen. That is why all Christians must take part; they should feel that they are involved in their Christian apostolate when they vote and when they work politically for the common good. This requires what we mentioned before: that ways be found to channel the different political options of people. It is not enough to create one single channel and force everyone to pass through it. Respect for pluralism is a requirement of these new times.

It is true that those persons who exercise leadership in our pastoral ministry—priests, religious, and some lay persons—should not take on militant or leadership roles. They have the right to express their political views but should not be in positions of political leadership because they should be signs of unity and evangelical freedom before anything else. Here I am speaking about those persons who function as leaders in the church and who guide the people in collaboration with the hierarchy, such as lay commissions, priests, religious, etc. We must be signs of unity in the world. As leaders we cannot take sides with anybody but must preserve our evangelical freedom. In this way we fulfill the church's role, as we were saying before, of being a critical conscience and of being severe with faults, whoever is responsible for them.

Keep in mind also, sisters and brothers, fidelity to the doctrine of the church. Even in matters of political militancy or leadership, Christians must take their faith into account. When they become active in some group, they should not betray what their Christian faith demands of them. Let us read again what Pope Paul VI says in paragraph 26 of *Octagesima Adveniens*: «The Christian who wishes to live his faith in a political activity which he thinks of as service»—that's what politics is, a service, not something to be traded on—«cannot without contradicting himself adhere to ideological systems which radically or substantially go against his faith and his concept of man» (OA 26).

The pope goes on to make this statement concrete with two examples: «People cannot adhere to the Marxist ideology, to its atheistic materialism, to its dialectic of violence, and to the way it absorbs individual freedom in the collectivity, while at the same time denying all transcendence to man and his personal and collective history» (OA 26). This is a summary of the Marxist ideology that cannot be an option for Christians because Christians cannot accept atheistic materialism or the dialectic of violence, nor can they conceive of individual freedom

within a collectivity such as Marxism conceives it, nor can they deny transcendence to human beings and to their personal and collective history.

«At the same time», the pope says, «Christians cannot adhere to the liberal ideology which believes it exalts individual freedom by withdrawing it from every limitation, by stimulating it through exclusive seeking of interest and power, and by considering social solidarities as more or less automatic consequences of individual initiatives, not as an aim and a major criterion of the value of the social organization» (OA 26). Thus both atheistic materialism and liberal capitalism are excluded as political options for the Christian, for liberal capitalism is selfish, and its sole objective is personal enrichment and possession of power for particular interests.

Finally, sisters and brothers, do not try to identify the church with these ideologies. The church has a duty to guide people, as I am doing now, but no one who feels guided by the church has the right to say, «I am the church here; my organization and the church are one and the same thing». That is false. The church maintains her autonomy and her independence from every party and every ideology. While she points out those elements that are contrary to Christian principles, she respects the options that are legitimate for Christians. I think it is necessary, sisters and brothers, that we always clarify our ideas, especially in these topics that are urgent for our times. Those persons who are concerned about social issues should especially know how to orient them in light of the Gospel.

Life of the church

Now you can understand why in our homilies we speak concretely about the present situation of our country and the archdiocese. That is the setting within which this church moves, and so now I wish to share with you some news of our church family.

First, tomorrow the priests will meet together, especially for the purpose of preparing the archdiocese's contribution to the bishops' meeting that will take place in October in Puebla. I'm referring to the general assembly of the Latin American bishops. Also tomorrow, taking advantage of this meeting of the clergy, our beloved brother, auxiliary Bishop Marco René Revelo, will make a presentation. We await him with true brotherly love.

With regard to the communities, I am happy to invite you to join in Christian joy with the community of Zacamil, where the people have organized a day dedicated to the very spiritual theme of contemplation and action. We have seen how fitting it is that there be much prayer in our communities so that our activity does not become sterile activism but rather a true action of the church. I also want to greet and thank the community of Tecoloco in San Pedro Perulapán, where we joyfully celebrated with the people the feast of their patron, Saint Anthony. I congratulate Chalatenango for their course for catechists, which is now about to conclude. I also greet and congratulate the pastoral team of the parish of Lourdes and Colón, which inaugurates this Sunday their pastoral ministry and their catechetical program. As you can see, people are working with a true understanding of the Gospel and pastoral ministry.

At this moment sad news has arrived: there is a fire on the block located at Avenida Cuscatlán and Octava Calle Oriente. We have already expressed our solidarity with those who are suffering, and we express now our protest and the moral demand of the church: those who

are responsible for serious damages, such as those caused by fire, are guilty of serious sin and will not find pardon until restitution is made for the evil caused by these criminal acts.

Even though there are many other things to talk about, sisters and brothers, I believe what has been said already is enough to help us understand the beautiful message of this Fourth Sunday of Lent. You know that Lent is a time that prepares the Christian people to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, which is called the paschal mystery. Lent is a journey toward Easter. Thus, the paschal mystery does not conclude with Good Friday. I want to stress this strongly because we have to put an end to a very negative tradition that exists among us. Many Catholics view Holy Week as only Good Friday, laying Christ to rest in the procession of Holy Burial. That viewpoint would mean practicing a religion of failures; it would mean believing in a dead man. Christ died for love, but he rose as God, and that is great news: the death of Jesus was given the stamp of approval by the resurrection, and the resurrection guarantees our redemption. That is why true Christians cannot be content just with attending the Holy Burial; they must continue on and arrive at Holy Saturday evening when we proclaim the definitive triumph of our redemption. Lent and Holy Week move in that direction, toward the Holy Saturday night of Resurrection. Let us accompany one another, and let us be church on that night which we will truly try to make a night of victory, the victory of faith and hope. It is not right that our people, marked by the sign of the cross and traveling the road to Calvary, should end up with a dead Christ. Perhaps that is why for many people religion is seen as pessimistic conformity lacking in courage. But those who celebrate a Holy Week that climaxes with Easter have their hearts filled with hope. Even if now they carry their crosses and are tortured, martyred, misunderstood, and assaulted, as Christ was on Good Friday, they know that the story does not end there. We know that after three days (though we don't know exactly when) our Salvadoran people will also see their hope made reality in a new Easter.

Therefore, my Salvadoran sisters and brothers, I invite you to celebrate this Holy Week as it should be celebrated: right up until Easter. In this way we reinforce our efforts on behalf of liberation, and we make our redeemed people a people filled with Christian hope. Thus I announce to you now that the night of Holy Saturday will be a night of true victory. Our young people are already preparing the Holy Saturday liturgy, and all the young men and women who want to be part of the church's hymn of hope are invited to participate. The same goes for adults and children. May you all see what the church sows in Holy Week, which is not just the pain that ends with the Holy Burial. The pain is there, yes, and we sing hymns of thanksgiving for this love that suffered so much, but we also sing alleluias of hope to the victorious One who promises us that we also will be victorious in our struggle for the genuine liberation of our people.

Today's readings, then, orient us toward Easter. The three readings today offer us a beautiful catechesis and make us aware of the meaning of our baptism. In former times baptism was received on Holy Saturday evening because the risen Christ is understood to live now in those who are baptized, in his priestly people who through baptism participate in redemption. Accordingly, the Lenten readings are a true catechesis for the instruction of those who are to be baptized, and they also serve to rekindle the awareness of those already baptized regarding the greatness, the hope, and the joy of being Christian. And so we have in today's three readings, sisters and brothers, these three ideas: first, baptism as a vocation; second, baptism as a participation in the divine life; and third, baptism as provoking a crisis between the baptized and the society in which they live.

Baptism as a vocation

What a beautiful lesson! How timely this is for us who are baptized! In the first place, baptism is a vocation. God reveals himself and calls people to himself. The people grow in their faith and discover in Christ the God who calls them and offers himself to them. This is precisely the meaning of the first reading. God rejects King Saul and tells the prophet Samuel that he has chosen another king «according to his heart». God sends the prophet to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse, and gives him the inspiration to see which of Jesse's sons was chosen to be the future king of Israel.

Samuel is afraid because the repression of Saul is terrible: «How can I go? Saul will hear of it and kill me if he knows I am looking for another king» (1 Sam 16:2). God counsels him about what he has to do. So Samuel pretends that he is going to offer a sacrifice. He tells Jesse, «Show me your sons». They pass before him, and when Samuel sees the oldest son, well-built and strong, he thinks that he is the future king. But God says, «Not that one [...] ¹. Man sees appearances, but I look into the heart. I will point him out to you» (1 Sam 16:7). So the eight sons of Jesse pass before Samuel, and when they have all passed by, Samuel still has not found the inspiration of God in any of them. He asks, «Are there no other boys?» Jesse replies, «Yes, there is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep». The prophet tells Jesse: «Send for him; we will not begin to eat until he arrives here». When David arrives, he looks very young—who would ever think of him! But God tells Samuel, «This is the one I have chosen to be king according to my heart» (1 Sam 16:11-13). Then Samuel anoints David in the presence of Jesse and his brothers. He takes the horn of oil—the sign of anointing—and bathes David in oil, anointing him. The Bible says, «From that day on the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David» (1 Sam 16:13b). Now he is king, and it is just a matter of waiting for the right circumstance to take possession of the kingdom.

Now what else is baptism but this? It is a choice made by God. Through a sacrament God draws near to me and calls me and anoints me. We are anointed, sisters and brothers. Remember the moment when the priest puts oil on the head of the child and anoints the child as priest, prophet, and king. You and I, all of us, are like David: God has called us, and we have a vocation. That is why Saint Paul is so insistent: «Be faithful to your vocation».

My Christian sisters and brothers, you and I are great because of our baptism. We are anointed; we are a kingly people. The Lord has called us. People discover this God little by little, and this indeed is the task of us who are baptized: to keep discovering God through our faith which matures day by day. Here I'm going to introduce the beautiful example in today's gospel. The blind man is not aware of what is about to happen to him, but Jesus who is God is passing by. Jesus stops when he sees the blind man, and he makes the gestures you just heard about. When they ask the blind man who cured him, the first answer he gives is in verse 11 of today's reading: «It was the man called Jesus» (John 9:11). His knowledge of Jesus is still very vague. Later, when they ask him if he believes Jesus is a sinner because he cured on the Sabbath, the blind man says, «No, for me he is a prophet» (John 9:17). There in verse 17 the man's profession advances.

In verse 33, when the enemies of Christ accuse him of being a sinner, the blind man reacts: «If this man were not from God, he would not have power to cure me who has been

¹ Interruption in the recording of the homily.

blind from birth» (John 9:33). He states that there is a relationship between God and Christ. Do you see how the faith of this man is progressing? Finally, in verse 36, he again meets Jesus, who asks him if he believes in the Son of Man, and the poor man says, «Who is he?» (John 9:35-36). What a beautiful revelation of Christ! It is like with the Samaritan woman of last Sunday: «You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he» (John 4:26). Thus, the blind man has not only had his sight restored but has also had his soul enlightened by faith. He discovers in the man Jesus the God who has come to save, one powerful enough to restore sight to the blind and do everything that he desires in order to redeem the world. Then the blind man falls to his knees and proclaims, «I do believe, Lord!» (John 9:38). He has achieved the height of faith.

Dear sisters and brothers, this is the meaning of our baptism: an ongoing journey in our knowledge of Jesus. May all of us participating in this reflection achieve this height of faith. Let us kneel down to adore Christ because in him we see not only a man but a God who became man.

When I spoke to you about liberation, I said we should not confuse it with the earthly types of liberation. That is why the church rejects any liberation that is characterized by materialism, atheism, war, and violence. That is not God's liberation. Likewise, liberation that is based on money or power or selfishness has nothing to do with the peace of God. The peace of God is seen in the blind man who encounters Christ and says, «Lord, I believe. I don't know where you are taking history, but I know that you are the Lord of history, and you fill my heart with hope» (John 9:38). So also is the Christian who during Holy Week, on the holy night of the resurrection, celebrates the risen Christ and tells him, «You are powerful. You are the Lord of eternity and life. You know how you are going to lead our beloved country and our church out of this dead-end alley».

Baptism is participation in the divine life

This, then, sisters and brothers, is my second thought: baptism is participation in the divine life. Here in the gestures of today's gospel, according to commentators, Saint John is reflecting the baptismal rites. You know that the Gospel was written many years after the death of Christ, when the Christian communities were reflecting on the life of Christ through their liturgy, their preaching, and their reflections. No doubt, as Saint John reflected on the baptismal rite, he found in the symbol of a blind man who received sight a way to describe the beauty of a baptized person. We see there in the saliva, the anointing, and the bathing in the Pool of Siloam all the elements of a baptismal rite.

What is a sacrament? My sisters and brothers, a sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible reality. Do not forget this theological definition. In every sacrament there is a visible element, but there is also a reality that is not seen but is signified. In the gospel account we see the gestures of Christ as his hands make mud and place it on the blind man's eyes; we see the water of Siloam—these are visible things like the water in our baptismal fonts and the hand of the priest who pours water over the head of the child. These are visible signs like the host of wheat that is there on the altar and through the hands of the priest becomes a sign of an invisible presence. Christ, who becomes present at the moment of consecration, is the one who also graces the waters of baptism. It is he who puts healing power in the water of Siloam and in the mud that gives sight to a man born blind. Christ is the great sacrament of the Father. He is the visible sign.

«The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, “Go to Siloam and wash”» (John 9:11). For this man who cannot go deeper, this is Christ. But when he reaches faith, he falls to his knees: «You are not just a man; in your visibility as man is hidden the power of God» (John 9:38). So it is also in every sacrament.

For this reason, sisters and brothers, we insist on the need to receive the sacraments with greater awareness. It is useless for us to receive the consecrated host if we are not aware that there in the taste of wheat is hidden the infinite presence of God our Lord. What use is it to bring a child to the baptistery just for the sake of social convention? Do we not see what happens in the soul of that child of the flesh through the visible signs of water and anointing? What happened in us when we were baptized? We were cleansed of original sin and incorporated into Christ as living members. We became members of the living body which is the church. This is the grace of baptism.

My sisters and brothers, we will not understand the greatness of this dignity of being baptized until we are in heaven. Through water and the ceremonies of baptism Christ himself anointed me, just as he anointed David through Samuel and gave him his spirit to be king of Israel. Christ anointed me as he anointed the man born blind and gave sight to his eyes but above all allowed his soul to see clearly and discover the values of faith. May this Lent help us to purify ourselves and make us more aware of the life of God in which we participate as Christians. Perhaps by mischance we have lost this life of God through sin, for each time we sin we chase the Holy Spirit away and enthrone the devil within us. People say that there are no possessed persons. How can that be true since those in mortal sin are possessed by the devil? God no longer possesses them, but because of sin they are possessed by the devil. Lent is a time when we are called to do penance so that if we, as baptized persons honored to be called children of God, have lost our dignity by opting for sin, then we are able to repent and return to God. Therefore, during this Easter season of 1978 we can be pardoned and recover the life that was given to us in baptism. That is why we should see the gestures of Christ in the sacraments.

In the intimate diary of a Protestant minister we find this beautiful confession: «As a good Protestant, I believed that the church was a screen that hindered my relationship with Christ, and that is why I rejected the church with its institution of sacraments and the Roman pontiff. All that appeared to me as false. But now that I am a Catholic I have understood that the institution of the church and the sacraments of the church are precisely instruments of Christ that give me his truth and his grace. I understand the need for the church, and therefore I have become a Catholic so that I can rely on these sacraments of the church and know that in every sacrament of the church is a gesture of the hand of Christ». The hand of Christ is present in the confessor who blesses me and says, «I absolve you from your sins». The hand of Christ is present in the bishop who places his hands on the young person in confirmation and brings down the power of the Holy Spirit. The hand of Christ is present in the hand of the priest who anoints those who are dying as they travel toward eternity and leave this world behind. Every sacrament is an action of Christ in my own life, making me participate in God's life. Let us hold the sacraments in esteem, sisters and brothers, especially the great sacrament of our baptism.

Baptism provokes a crisis between the baptized and the society in which they live

Finally, sisters and brothers, I offer this final thought that underlies the greater part of today's gospel: every baptized person provokes a crisis. The man born blind is made to see, and there is a reaction among those who know him: «This is not the same man; he just looks like him».

The blind man has to tell them, «It's me!» (John 9:9). Later, his parents are fearful of the Jewish authorities, who have already said that anyone who believed that Christ is the Messiah will be expelled from the synagogue. So the blind man's parents are afraid to confess Christ and say, «Yes, we know that he is our son, but how he recovered his sight we have no idea. Ask him for he is of age» (John 9:20-22). Then comes the crisis, above all with Christ's enemies, the Pharisees, who are going to judge Christ because he gave sight to a blind man on the Sabbath. They claim, «This man cannot be from God. This man is a sinner» (John 9:16). The blind man responds, «I do not know if he is a sinner. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see, and I know that God does not listen to sinners» (John 9:25.31).

The polemic between the Pharisees and the cured blind man is most interesting. Reflect on it a while because you will see there how baptized persons must confront the world: they must bear witness to their baptism and not be ashamed of their great benefactor; they must admit that without Christ they would not have sight; they must confess that he is the Son of God. In making this confession, they cannot deny this great truth; they must be witnesses. That is what every baptized person is, a trusted witness, an eye-witness: «I have seen him, and I am a protagonist of what I must proclaim». This is the boldness of the baptized, and they have no fear of commitment.

Finally, in this polemic Christ is accused *in absentia*. Be aware, sisters and brothers, that in every baptized person it is Christ who is persecuted. In the story of the man born blind it was not the blind man but Christ who was of interest to the Pharisees. So also each of us has a responsibility that goes beyond ourselves; each of us is already a representative of Christ, and we must bear witness. There are today baptized persons who are cowardly, refusing to confess Christ during the church's difficult hours; there are those who sell themselves to seek a more comfortable life, betraying their Catholicism. These people betray not only themselves and not only the church of Christ—they betray Christ himself.

That is why this trial of the absent defendant concludes when the accused Christ presents himself at the end of today's gospel. Once present, the man accused becomes the judge who tells his enemies, «I have come into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see but sincerely want to see will find sight. But all those who proudly think they can see better than others and reject the humble gesture of the blind man who was cured—these will remain blind». Knowing that he was speaking of them, the Pharisees ask Christ, «Then do you mean that we are blind?» And Christ continues with his tremendous dialectic: «I do not say that you are blind, for if you were blind it would not be your fault. But because you say that you see, because you are gratified by your vain knowledge, and because you judge with human criteria, therefore you are guilty, and you are willfully blind. Indeed, there is no worse blindness than to have no desire to see» (John 9:39-41).

This is how people will react, sisters and brothers, to the Christ of our baptism. We must be humble and recognize that we can see only because of Christ. We should always try to view the history of the world according to his criteria. We should view our social, political, and economic relationships not with the self-sufficiency of the Pharisees, but with the humility of the man who had no sight but who thanks to faith was given light by God. We are poor; we who have faith are the poorest, but to the extent that we confess our poverty, God will give us light. Those who are self-sufficient and proud, those who despise others and think them blind, those who feel they can judge everybody because they have the supreme truth—these people are truly blind. «For judgment I came into the world», says Christ (John 9:39), «but there is no need

for me to pass judgment for you yourselves are doing so. Those who believe in me already see and receive a judgment of absolution. Those who reject my teaching, those who reject me, those who reject my church, those who reject my preaching—they have already judged themselves. They are blind!»

Beloved sisters and brothers, we want to gain sight with Christ, and our faith has to be our greatest pride. Let us prepare ourselves to celebrate this Holy Week worthily. Like the blind man, let us now proclaim our faith in God.