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PENTECOST, BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH

**Pentecost
14 May 1978**

*Acts 2:1-11
1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13
John 20:19-23*

Dear sisters and brothers, today is the church's birthday. This is the most brilliant feast in the whole liturgical cycle that we've been following step by step. Today is Pentecost. Today is the crowning celebration of Easter. Today the glorified Christ is perpetuated in the people who want to follow him. Christ lives, today more than ever, in Pentecost. My homily could be given this title: «Pentecost, Birthday of the Church». And as good children of the church celebrating the birthday of our mother, let us rejoice in the happiness of a home where the birthday of the queen of the home is celebrated with festivity. Today is the birthday of the church, and I will develop my thought with these three ideas: first, the church is always an event; second, the Spirit of God makes the church a new creation; and third, the Holy Spirit renews the present-day world.

The church is always an event

First of all, I say that the church is an event; the church is news. Twenty centuries have passed since the event we just heard about in the Acts of the Apostles. Just as on that first Pentecost when the sound of a hurricane and a rain of fiery tongues fell on Jerusalem, attracting all the pilgrims who had come from the far corners of the known world for the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-3), so also today the church continues to be news and event. The church is always an event that attracts people to hear about the marvelous deeds of God. The church, as a faithful follower of Christ, denounces from her Gospel perspective the sin of the world wherever it is found. That is why the church is always news: because we always need to hear about the wonderful deeds of God and because all of us, but especially the poorest and most distressed, those who seem to live without hope, need to hear that voice of the Spirit who enlivens their hopes and denounces the injustices that oppress them.

Who could have told me that today, this Pentecost of 1978, the church would become like the hurricane of Jerusalem, attracting the attention of all those who hear me? Even the Supreme Court of Justice, with its press notice to all the republic, has made this Pentecost day especially interesting in the Cathedral of San Salvador. I know that there is great expectation: how is the archbishop going to respond to the summons of the Supreme Court of Justice? To start off, I want to tell you that the Supreme Court has today been the sign God has used to attract people's attention; it is serving as the hurricane and the tongues of fire of Pentecost to make the eternal news, which is the church, more interesting.

There will always be Pentecost in the church as long as the church makes her face transparent to the beauty of the Holy Spirit. When the church stops drawing her strength from that power on high that Christ promised her and gave her on this day, when instead she looks for support to the feeble forces of worldly power and wealth, then the church will cease to be news. The church will remain beautiful, perennially young, and attractive in every century only as long as she is faithful to the Spirit that floods her, only as long as she reflects that Spirit through the communities, through her pastors, and through her very life.

In our archdiocese, thanks be to God, the church tries to be faithful to this Spirit. That is why I believe we must be grateful to the Lord for this hour of Pentecost, which is not only this Sunday, May 14, 1978. Our Pentecost is one that is prolonged in a sorrowful way of the cross, but also in the Easter of resurrection. It is the profound joy that fills the heart of the pastor and the communities. Wherever I go, Pentecost is transpiring in our archdiocese. I ask you all to be faithful to the Spirit—my beloved priests, my dear religious communities, all the institutions that glory in the name of Catholic (such as the schools, the associations, the communities, etc.), and all those Christians beyond the limits of Catholicism who have expressed their solidarity with the evangelical attitude of this church of Christ which is on pilgrimage in the four departments of the archdiocese. I want to tell you, dear Catholic and Christian sisters and brothers: let us try to be faithful to the Spirit! Let us try to be the perfect reflection of the Holy Spirit! Let us try above all to generate hope in the Spirit of God and to be faithful to the Spirit's holiness which floods this kingdom of God on earth! I congratulate all those pastors, catechists, celebrators of the word, communities, etc., who are collaborating with the Spirit of God in renewing the beauty of the archdiocese by giving it every day a face that truly reflects the beauty, the light, the fire, the hurricane wind of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God makes the church a new creation

My second thought is the following: it is the Spirit of God that makes the church a new creation. Let us look at the gospel passage: the risen Christ in the evening of Easter day enters the Cenacle and stands facing his timid disciples who have gone into hiding for fear of persecution by the Jewish authorities. With the serenity of one whose life will see no end, Christ says to his disciples, «Peace be with you» (John 20:19). Then, with a solemn gesture that recalls the first pages of the Bible, the moment when God created man in his image and likeness by breathing the spirit of life into the clay of the earth (Gen 2:7), Christ who is God and man breathes upon the brows of the apostles (John 20:22). We might say that it is the Creator creating in the clay of human flesh a new creation. «As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain, they are retained» (John 20:21-23).

When Adam awoke from that first human sleep and saw the breath of God reflected in his whole being, he understood well the marvel of creation and fell on his knees to adore God—the first gesture of a man kneeling before God. So I can imagine what was in the minds of the apostles who were simple men, cowards hiding for fear of persecution, when they received the Holy Spirit. Saint John in his Gospel seeks to unite in one single action of Christ the resurrection and Pentecost because, even though they are separated by fifty days in our liturgical year, these two events form the single reality which is the glorification of Christ. The man-God becomes a Creator who originates a new creation in those apostles. Thus we understand that the apostles are like a new Adam, possessing not just the natural life given to them by the Creator but also the life of the Holy Spirit which is the life of God given to his church. When the apostles in

amazement open their eyes, they feel omnipotent, almost like God. They have in their hands the mission of Christ to go out to all the world. They have in their hands the power of God to forgive. The church holds this Easter event in her hands so that this sector of the world called church might radiate the life of God to all humankind. The bud, the ferment, the light, the leaven—all those comparisons that Christ used for his church in the world—were then and there created. This is the Easter creation!

Pentecost, then, is the church's birthday because on this day the church was born. The church is the group of those who believe in Christ and receive the Spirit of Christ; they receive the all-powerful breath of the Messiah and Redeemer in order to make all his people into redeemers and messiahs. All of us, dear Christians, are this new creation. The world cannot be renewed without us, and we are responsible for the renewal of the world. Starting from that day, Christ has set up his kingdom in the midst of humanity so that God's kingdom is now being built up on this earth. Preaching about a church that hopes only in fulfillment after death falsifies the kingdom of God. The kingdom that Christ preached and established is precisely the one created by his breath; it is the kingdom of concrete individuals on pilgrimage through history who are responsible for transforming history into God's kingdom. That doesn't mean that we have any ambition for temporal powers. Those powers mean little to the church since she has the great responsibility of sanctifying all human institutions. She doesn't need to take away power or money or idols from anybody. The church needs only hearts that are converted to Christ, hearts that are purified as clean vessels so that the new life that was inaugurated in the resurrection and in Pentecost can descend upon them.

Throughout twenty centuries the church has continued to be news and has celebrated her birthday year by year. Today, on this Pentecost, we add one more year to the life of the church. We can affirm that in 1978, as the universal church, to which the beautiful church of my archdiocese is united, celebrates her feast day, her birthday, she is as young and as beautiful as ever; she is lovelier, stronger, more embracing, and more faithful to the Spirit. Blessed be God! It is truly worthwhile, my sisters and brothers, to belong to this new creation and to allow ourselves to be flooded by this power of the Spirit that identifies us with Christ's mission of bringing peace, destroying sin, and making humankind just.

This would be the opportunity, if we had time, to give a beautiful catechetical lesson on the meaning of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Yahweh, as that term unfolds through the pages of Scripture. In Hebrew, the original biblical word is *ruah*, which in Greek is translated as *pneuma* and in Latin as *spiritus*. What does the Bible seek to express with this word *ruah*, which we first find in the mouth of God as he is molding clay into the first human being (Gen 2:7)? Of course, it means «life», the life of God which can be communicated to humans.

As you know, the Bible has many anthropomorphic expressions, that is, expressions that speak of God in human terms. Thus when God's actions are compared with the physical gestures of humans, the Bible frequently speaks of this *ruah* of God, this breath of God, this spirit, this exhaling of God as a power that gives life, as a power that transforms sinfulness into morality. Sometimes this breath of God is expressed as a hurricane, which the Bible interprets as God breathing heavily. At other times this breath of God is gentle as a breeze, and this is interpreted as the quiet breathing of God. But this breath of God is always creative and always called holy. We also have the image of the «holy arm» of God. This is another anthropomorphic expression since God has no arms, even though the Bible uses this image when referring to God's power (Isa 52:10). In the same way the Bible speaks of the spirit, the *ruah*, the *pneuma*,

the holy breath of God as something that emanates from him in the natural order. And when Christ came, he raised it to the supernatural order. All the literature of the New Testament draws on this heritage of the Spirit of God and elevates it to the great revelation of Christ, who tells us that the Spirit of God is not simply the breathing of God but is a person. He is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity in which the Father eternally engenders the Son and in which Father and Son love one another so profoundly that their personal love is exhaled as another person. The Spirit of God is love, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. In theology the Holy Spirit is referred to as *hypostasis*, which means «person», a person like the Father, a person like the Son. Once glorified, Christ sends the Holy Spirit to bear witness that God has accepted the redemption and is coming to the world to take possession of all those who believe in Christ.

«If I do not go», Christ tells them at the Last Supper, «I will not be able to send you another Consoler, another Advocate» (John 16:7). Do you see how Christ speaks about another divine being like himself, someone just as loving, powerful, and truthful as himself? No longer will we see Christ as God incarnate in a man and walking the dusty roads of earth, but along those same roads we will see the feet of many women and many men who follow Christ in the Holy Spirit and are guided by the divine power of redemption, for this Spirit which Christ sent from himself and the Father to the pilgrim church on earth is the other Advocate, the one who will preach through her ministers, the one who will continue to be the life of the church.

If I had time, sisters and brothers, I would analyze section four of the Council's Constitution on the Church. But I urge those Catholics who have learned something about the Council to open today the text of that dogmatic constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, which speaks about the church, and to read section four about the action of the Holy Spirit in the church (LG 4). Notice the magnificent synthesis that the Council makes with regard to the working of the Holy Spirit in the church! It says that the Holy Spirit guides the church to the fullness of truth. It says that the Holy Spirit renews the church in the holiness of her members. It says that the Holy Spirit enriches all the communities of the church with his gifts and his charisms, as Saint Paul said in today's second reading, which is another beautiful synthesis of the working of the Holy Spirit in our midst. It is the Spirit that raises up vocations and bestows upon the church her hierarchical and charismatic gifts. It is the Spirit that gives the church perseverance and strength to continue her mission despite the many tribulations.

Therefore, on this birthday of the church, sisters and brothers, we should earnestly implore the Spirit's strength so that the church, and concretely the Archdiocese of San Salvador, will have many priests, religious, catechists, committed lay people, and communities that truly allow themselves to be guided by the force of the Holy Spirit. But I've said enough already to make it quite clear that we are fortunate—in our faith, in our hope, and in our Easter joy—to belong to this church that is an effective sign of a new creation in the midst of the world. If we truly have faith in the Holy Spirit, then let us as Catholics try to let ourselves be renewed! Let us become new men and women who demand new structures and who make our nation a new nation! Let us make the aim of our mission to destroy all the sins of El Salvador and to transform all our institutions so as to build the kingdom of God.

In El Salvador, Salvadoran Catholics must be seed grains of renewal! If we are truly a people invaded by the Holy Spirit; if the church is the depository of that creative breath of the Redeemer that makes all his followers into genuine liberators who truly free our world of sin; if we are working for the true development of life in God's grace which makes us children of God and citizens of heaven, then we should not allow this nation to be untrue to its name, for it

is gloriously named after our Divine Savior. Indeed, the whole world could be called by that name because everyone who believes in Christ is a prolongation of his divine salvation, but we Salvadorans should all the more earnestly make a faithful promise based on our baptism, our commitment, our Gospel. Despite everything, we must work impelled by the Spirit! We all feel the Spirit, but we are not all faithful to the Spirit. We feel reproach because of our cowardice, but we are not able to overcome this cowardice. We feel the Spirit's powerful breath that can make us more courageous, and yet we are cowards and even traitors; we lie even though he is the Spirit of truth. Those who have received the Holy Spirit should not call themselves Christians if they are assaulting the Spirit and living lives that are filled with falsehood, injustice, slander, violence, and everything that represses the life of the Spirit. May our church truly be the new creation in the midst of all the circumstances of our history.

The Holy Spirit renews the present-day world¹

Finally, sisters and brothers, my third thought is that the Holy Spirit renews our present-day world. Here I'm going to focus on three events of this glorious Pentecost of 1978.

The first event took place last night: the confirmation of two hundred young people who filled this cathedral on the eve of Pentecost. With their sponsors and their parents they promised to receive the Holy Spirit in the august sacrament of confirmation and to be faithful to the inspiration of the Spirit. When the ceremony was over, one young man stood in this same pulpit where I am now preaching and delivered a very moving message to the young people². I want to highlight the two great initiatives he proposed.

He exhorted all the young people, especially the two hundred who were confirmed last night, to continue to meet together to meditate on the word of God; he encouraged them to organize small reflection groups. We all know, sisters and brothers, how dangerous reflection on the word is in our present situation. Our program of religious study tries to use God's word to make people aware of our reality; it resists the cowardly folk who want to conform and encourages those who seek justice and true order and an end of violence. The word of God causes conflict, but meeting together to reflect on this word is a constructive, not a subversive, challenge to our society. Last night our young people committed themselves to reflect on this word of God.

But there was another initiative that came from the young people confirmed last night in the Cathedral of San Salvador. It was an invitation—or almost a challenge—to all the young people of the archdiocese to begin to prepare for the celebration of Holy Week of 1979 so that Holy Saturday night will be an Easter celebration of young people, an Easter celebration in which Salvadoran youth proclaim that Christ is alive, that Christ has risen, and that the best argument for his unending life is found not in the empty tomb but in the lives of all the young men and women who incarnate in themselves the enthusiasm, the joy, the sincerity, and the spirit of Christ's new life.

This event constituted for me the most beautiful gesture that the Holy Spirit has given us on this feast of Pentecost of 1978. I want to congratulate and thank the Catholic schools, the parishes, and the communities that collaborated in this beautiful initiative of the confirmation

¹ Under this heading Archbishop Romero includes his usual section on the life of the church and the events of the week.

² «Celebrating Our Lives. Message from the Youth» in *Orientación* (21 May 1978).

of these young people. This event also confirms our wish that confirmation be seen as a sacrament not for unaware children but for older youth. Starting from the first Sunday of Advent—that is, November this year—small children will not be allowed to be confirmed. Try to understand us, sisters and brothers; this is for the good of the children themselves. It is one thing to be confirmed as a child who is unaware of what is happening and quite another thing to be confirmed as a mature youth. The young people feel new passions stir in their hearts, and they experience new circumstances in the world. Even though baptized as young children, they realize that as adolescents they need new strength from the Holy Spirit. That is why our Pentecost was a great event, because two hundred young people with full awareness opened their hands and their hearts to say, «Come, Holy Spirit, fill my youthfulness with joy!»

The second event we celebrate today is Seminary Day. Here in El Salvador we join Seminary Day with the feast of Pentecost, and this should make us reflect carefully. On this day we send our greetings of admiration and affection to the young men who have heard God's call to become priests at a time in our history when being a priest is to be either crazy or a hero. There is no middle ground. Mediocre priests, half-hearted priests, priests who make deals with God and with the devil—these are not authentic vocations. We greet and we admire the young men who today fill the seminary and who make a commitment to the priesthood. And if they are not crazy, then it is because they aspire to great heroism. It is worthwhile being a protagonist with Christ endowed with the strength of his Spirit to preach the kingdom in the midst of so much idolatry in the world.

It is important for all of us, dear sisters and brothers, to have a great appreciation for the seminary of San José de la Montaña. It is not simply a cement monument built at the feet of San José; it is a school that forms priests for the church. It should be the convergence point and a symbol of hope for the whole life of the diocese; we should sustain it with our prayers and moral support. We should not discourage our young men but rather speak to them from the world about the kind of priests we're hoping to get from the seminary. Above all, sisters and brothers, we should understand that at this time of such profound transformations—as a seminarian said here before the beginning of Mass—the seminarians of today cannot be the seminarians in the old traditions, but neither can they be guerrillas, because the seminary is not a school of guerrilla training even though it has been labeled as such. The seminary is a school that develops young men to become the priests that the people of today need: priests who are truly men of prayer, completely committed to God; priests who also know how to be one with the people, living among the people, being the voice of the people, experiencing the anxieties and the hopes of their people. Thanks be to God, these are the kind of seminarians that today fill San José de la Montaña.

Also, sisters and brothers, let us not forget the humble conditions of the families from which most of these vocations come. They need our understanding and not our alms; it is the whole people of God who needs these priests, and we are all responsible. If there are families who, though very poor, have given their sons for the priesthood, it is only just that other families who have not received the same grace should share in the honor by generously helping the seminary. In these days, sisters and brothers, when those who desire to be priests encounter so many obstacles, one of which is economic, it should make no difference. Our strength is in the Holy Spirit who knows how to raise up from this generous people the support which enables us to maintain a seminary filled with vocations.

I want to honor here and congratulate the team of young priests who, representing the whole Salvadoran church, are training these young men with great care. I would like the people to get to know them so that it will be clearly understood that these priests responsible for the formation of our future clergy are not guilty of any of the false accusations which often seek to discredit the work of the seminary.

With regard to the seminary I also want to pay a tribute of profound gratitude and admiration to the unforgettable figure of Father Ladislao Segura who has left us. The seminary, in a gesture of heartfelt gratitude, has buried his body in the chapel, near the Blessed Sacrament and the image of the Virgin where the seminarians pray. In this way the seminarians will always be there in prayer over the body of a man who we might say consumed his whole priestly life, a life that was hidden like the violet, in the service of this apostolate of vocations.

Finally, sisters and brothers, a third event of this Pentecost is an evangelical proclamation of justice in the midst of the realities of our country. Two weeks ago in this cathedral I spoke these words:

Sisters and brothers, we cannot forget that a group of lawyers is struggling to obtain an amnesty; they have published the reasons that led them to request this ruling on behalf of so many who are perishing in our prisons. These lawyers also denounce anomalies in the procedures of the First Criminal Court, where the judge does not allow lawyers to enter with their defendants even though the National Guard is allowed to be present and to intimidate the accused, who often bear evident marks of torture. A judge who does not denounce signs of torture but instead allows himself to be swayed by the damaging effect they have on the state of the accused is not a just judge. I ask, sisters and brothers, in view of these injustices that are seen all about us, even in the First Court and many other tribunals, not to mention judges that sell themselves:³ what is the Supreme Court of Justice doing? What is the function of this power, so transcendent in a democracy, which should be above every power and which should demand justice of everyone? I believe that the key to a great part of the malaise of our country is in the president of the Supreme Court of Justice and all his collaborators. They should show greater integrity in demanding of the legislature, of the tribunals, of the judges, of all the administrators of that sacrosanct word «justice», that they be truly agents of justice. I wish to congratulate the lawyers, whether Christian or not, who are acting with a great sense of justice in putting their finger on the sore. May all our lawyers truly represent a hope for justice, which is so ill-served in our society.

That is what I said two weeks ago⁴.

The secretary of the Supreme Court of Justice begs me «most respectfully to reveal the names of the venal judges»⁵ to whom I referred in my homily. In regard to this honorable communication I explain the following in order to avoid the possible confusion of public

³ This accusation provoked the reaction of the Supreme Court of Justice, which asked Archbishop Romero to provide the names of those judges. Archbishop Romero prepared his reply carefully in writing, and he read it at this moment in the homily. See «Archbishop Romero Responds to the Supreme Court» in *Orientación* (21 May 1978).

⁴ Homily for 30 April 1978.

⁵ Note from the secretariat of the Supreme Court of Justice in *La Prensa Gráfica* (8 May 1978).

opinion occasioned by the Supreme Court's publication and by commentaries in the national press⁶. First of all, I am thankful and happy to have the opportunity that the Supreme Court of Justice offers me to expand on what I said in my homily of April 30 in the cathedral Mass. I am thankful and happy because at last, after speaking out for so long against these things, the Supreme Court of Justice declares publicly its intention to begin to remedy what has gone wrong in that supreme power which is so important for the peace of our national life.

Second, the way in which the Supreme Court has called my attention to this matter is not through some juridical instrument since it obviously does not follow the legal requirements for such an action. Therefore, my reply is a spontaneous reaffirmation of my pastoral commitment in defense of justice, truth, and the people.

I also declare that the respectful note from the secretariat of the Supreme Court of Justice has mutilated the wording and deformed the spirit of my original words since it attempts to compel me to name the «venal judges» to whom I then referred. The fact is that I did not use that precise term «venal» cited in the note. I certainly did mention in my homily «judges who sell themselves», but this was a merely incidental term in the whole context of my message, which denounced more general irregularities pertaining to the whole system of judicial administration. To put exclusive emphasis on this incidental term without mentioning the general context that frames it is an illogical and unjust procedure that one might even suspect is malicious, for the Supreme Court of Justice thereby gives the impression that it wishes to conceal or distract public opinion from the central point of my message, which was and remains, I repeat, to denounce a social evil rooted in the institutions and procedures that are under the responsibility of that honorable tribunal.

Third, it is a well-known fact that the proof of acts of venality that the Supreme Court invites me to present is extremely difficult for the simple reason that the crime involves the official who sells himself as well as the person who offers the bribe and all those who have collaborated in the negotiation. It is therefore very difficult to get those who have been involved in such acts to offer testimony about them.

Fourth, I should also make it clear that when I preach my homilies, my viewpoint as a pastor has a theological, not a juridical perspective. I have repeated many times that the language and the attitude of the church do not intrude into areas of human science or politics. Rather she speaks out of an evangelical competency which obliges her to denounce sin wherever it is found. It is therefore as pastor that I point out those anomalies, and I do so with a desire to have them corrected; it is as pastor that I express the cry of the people oppressed by the sin and the injustice of the world. It is the duty of the Supreme Court of Justice, as an institution which in a true democracy must ensure the observance of laws and denounce the abuses of other powers of the state, «to proceed to enforcement of the law and to determine the corresponding responsibilities», as the note that I had the honor to receive expresses with eloquence.

So I am not the one who ought to name those whom the court can investigate. We need only listen, for example, to the well-known groups of mothers or families of political prisoners or disappeared persons or exiles; we need only read the many denunciations of venality published dutifully by the mass media, not only at home but abroad. Furthermore, I believe, at

⁶ An item in *La Prensa Gráfica* for 9 May 1978 stated that Archbishop Romero could be charged legally.

least from my theological perspective, that the concept of venality applies to any functionary who receives a salary from the people to administer justice and instead becomes an accomplice of injustice motivated by sinful satisfactions. This phenomenon can be investigated with greater facility by those who have the suitable means, the mission, and the grave duty to do so.

But fifth, certainly much more serious than the cases of venality are the other cases which demonstrate an absolute contempt on the part of the honorable Supreme Court of Justice for the obligations placed on it by the political constitution which all its members are obliged to observe. This honorable court has not remedied those situations that are so contrary to public freedoms and human rights, the defense of which constitutes its highest mission. Day after day we see the fundamental rights of Salvadorans trampled upon, and no institution denounces these assaults or proceeds sincerely and effectively to rectify these unjust procedures.

a) In article 8 of the Declaration of Human Rights it is stated that «everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law». Concretely in our country, article 164 of our constitution says, «Every person has the right of habeas corpus before the Supreme Court of Justice or Courts of the Second Instance whenever any authority or individual attempts to illegally restrict his or her freedom». Various judges have honestly and valiantly informed the Supreme Court of Justice that they have found it impossible to carry out their sacred constitutional mission with regard to the security forces.

b) Article 164 of the political constitution states, «No one should be deprived of life, liberty, or property without first having been heard and judged according to the laws. No one can be brought to trial twice for the same crime». I wish to point out that this situation has been especially painful for me because we have received so many mothers and wives of persons who have been disappeared. Some have been captured in actions which all Salvadorans know about; others disappeared in very particular situations which make us wonder about the reasons for the disappearance. Many mothers, wives, and children, from one end of the country to the other, have experienced a sorrowful way of the cross in the search for their dear ones without finding any answer whatsoever. We know of about eighty families with some member who was captured but has not yet been accused in any court. In view of this grievous situation, which day by day tears painfully at the hearts of these mothers, wives, and children, I cite just one maxim from article 9 of the Declaration of Human Rights: «No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile».

c) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares in article 13, «Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country». I also call to mind the right contemplated in the constitution that protects all those Salvadorans who find themselves in painful exile. Article 154 of the constitution states, «No Salvadoran shall be exiled or be refused entrance into the territory of the republic, nor shall he be denied a passport or other identification documents for his return». This is an official statement, and yet no heed is paid to the denunciations of those Salvadorans who cannot enter the country.

d) Article 162 of our constitution states as follows, «Every person has a right to submit respectfully a written petition to the established legal authorities, who will then resolve said situation and inform the petitioner about the resolution». We should not forget that several lawyers and citizens have exercised their respective rights and presented a petition of amnesty

for those persons involved in the events of San Pedro Perulapán. They have also petitioned that the Law for the Defense and Guarantee of Public Order be declared unconstitutional. Several weeks have passed since this petition was presented, and so far we have heard nothing from those who are supposed to resolve this situation.

e) The press has reported various anomalous situations that have greatly disturbed the people. Administrative and judicial officials have been accused, and even though these possible irregularities are in the public domain, we have not seen any sincere interest to do justice on the part of the competent authorities. It is not my intention to specify details about these situations. I am convinced that, if there really existed a social concern in public administration, the facts would be investigated exhaustively in order to bring about true social well-being and to set precedents.

f) Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and our own basic law, as I have said, hold as sacred the right to freedom, which has been violated in diverse ways: «No power, authority, or functionary can issue orders of detention or imprisonment that are not in accord with the law, and such orders must always be in writing»⁷. Contrary to this law, there are persons who have been captured by the security forces and brought before the courts after the eight days prescribed by our constitution. There are also persons who have been detained illegally for more than thirty days. These situations are publicly known and reported in the media, and they are at times most painful, such as the events of Aguilares, El Paisnal, San Pedro Perulapán, and San Marcos Lempa. Considering this and in accord with what is articulated in the constitution and in penal law, I am perfectly aware that there are legal terms which the security forces are obliged to obey with regard to the detention of prisoners, and I know that there are legal dispositions guaranteeing that such detention not be violent or terrifying for the person detained. Yet how many prisoners have been presented to the courts with evident marks and signs of mistreatment?

g) According to article 191 of our constitution, workers «have the right to organize themselves freely for the defense of their respective interests by forming labor unions». And article 23, section 4, of the Declaration of Human Rights states, «Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests». This principle has been violated in various ways, from restricting the freedom of labor leaders to subtly granting favors and concessions to those workers who reject the union organization. We won't even mention «the right of workers to strike» cited in article 192 of the political constitution. This measure, used in extreme cases by Salvadoran workers, has been massively repressed and misrepresented. It is said that most strikes are «subversive» and «reflect international slogans» even though they are used by workers as a legal measure to protect their occupational interests and to defend collective contracts, wages, and vacation days that are recognized by the labor code. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and our Magna Carta, unionization is consecrated as a social right. It is therefore impossible to understand all the complicated difficulties, hindrances, and obstacles that are put in the way of farm workers who want to practice this basic right.

My sixth and final point: it seems to us that in all these situations well known by the public, the judicial authorities have in general failed to intervene, even though, as I said in my earlier homily, their intervention is vitally important. I asked at that time, «What has happened

⁷ *Constitution of the Republic of El Salvador, 1962, Article 166.*

to the supreme role in a democracy of that power which should preserve justice and reprimand those who offend against it?» This accusation is inspired in a positive *animus corrigendi* and not in a malicious desire to defame. I believe it my duty to make the accusation, as pastor of a people suffering injustice. It is a duty placed on me by the Gospel, for which I am ready to face trial and prison even though that would only be adding on still another injustice.

I want to conclude by sincerely thanking the countless persons, especially the kind lawyers and law students who have spoken to me and expressed their solidarity with the church's earnest concern for justice in our nation. I thank them above all because their collaboration is a positive contribution to peace. For this church of the Holy Spirit, sisters and brothers, has been proclaiming peace since the distant times of the prophet Isaiah, and today she repeats her message with the renewed youth of this Pentecost of 1978. Responding to the dramatic reality of our people, she declares that justice alone will bring about peace—*opus iustitiae pax* (Isa 32:17).

Let us now proclaim our faith⁸. Many thanks for that seal of approval you have placed on my poor words. Now, filled with faith and hope in the Spirit who enlivens this church, let us say: «We believe in one God...».

⁸ The people gave Archbishop Romero prolonged applause.