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PENTECOST, THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES LIFE TO THE NEW COVENANT

Pentecost Sunday
3 June 1979

Acts 2:1-11

1 Corinthian 12:3b-7,12-13

John 20:19-23

Pentecost is a feast of youth and rejuvenation. That's why I'm happy, dear sisters and brothers, to place on the altar of this morning's celebration two magnificent blooms of our youth: the young men and women who have prepared to receive today the gift of the Holy Spirit and the young men from the seminary. There are about four hundred young men in the inter-diocesan major seminary and in the various minor seminaries of the dioceses and the religious congregations. All this is telling us that the church is always young, and our young people are a sign of that church that is always youthful and always in a process of renewal. That includes both those who have been called to the consecrated life and fill our seminaries, novitiates, and houses of formation and the young people who do not experience that call but who feel the need to live in the world while pursuing the commitment for which they have been given life. The Holy Spirit is the soul of this renewal and of this desire for spirituality.

If there was ever a time when the feast of the Holy Spirit takes on urgency, I think it is now when we see so much confusion, so many false voices of redemption, so much materialism and selfishness, so much hatred and violence. This is a precious moment when we feel a great desire for justice, for truth, for what is absolute and transcendent. This corresponds to humankind's deepest longings, which cannot be satisfied by anyone except the very Spirit of God who comes to take possession of us and to fill the vast emptiness we feel. Like Saint Augustine, we seek solutions in the world but never find them, and we say with him, «You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you»¹.

It's understandable, my dear young people, that you often seek out spiritual paths and doctrines that leave you mystified and fail to satisfy the thirst for the infinite that we all carry within us. So many seek answers in false gnosticism and spiritualities of eastern origin or—who knows!—in what is worse: in the diversions of drugs or vice or pleasure or in the false struggles of violence, revolution, and guerrilla activity. So many of our young people get lost. Even though they carry within themselves a desire for justice and for what is absolute and spiritual, the desire gets intoxicated in the midst of a world that does not lift itself to the heavens. Never lose that desire, but do not seek to satisfy it along twisting paths.

The church has an answer, and she is offering it to us today. Pentecost is a feast that has a biblical origin. It began as a feast of thanksgiving during the harvest season. Pentecost refers

¹ ST AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, I, 1, PL. 32, 661.

to fifty days, and it signifies that seven weeks have passed since the first sheaves of grain were collected. When the harvest was finished, the people would offer to the Lord the first fruits and give thanks for the harvest. Later on, the Jews also made Pentecost a time for celebrating the anniversary of God's covenant with Moses on Mount Sinai, and they renewed their covenantal promises on that day. But Christianity gave the feast another, more profound meaning since the number fifty is a symbol of perfection. The fifty days from the resurrection of Christ until today represent paschal plenitude, «the complete joy» of which Christ speaks, the peace that no one can take away (John 15:11). Pentecost is celebrated as the fullness of Christ's resurrection and his ascension into heaven; it also marks the coming of the Spirit of Christ, sent by the Father and by the Son, as the Lord had promised: «It is better for you that I go because if I do not go and am not glorified, I cannot send you the Spirit» (John 16:7). He commanded them to remain in prayer—just as these young people have prayed as they prepared for confirmation—and on a day like today the Spirit came! It was the birth of the church and the culmination of Easter. Pentecost is a time that profoundly marks the spirit of our Sunday Masses and of our whole Christian life wherever it unfolds. We have to be witnesses of Pentecost and of the Spirit of Christ who has descended upon the Christian people.

I'm happy, then, on this Sunday of Easter plenitude to present a summary of the whole season during which we have been celebrating our Christian redemption. Those of you who have followed the series of homilies will remember the main points. Please don't think only about the aspects of the homilies that touched on the social and political realities of our world—people have maligned me by saying that my preaching is just political. But those of you who have followed my catechesis during Lent, Holy Week, and Easter with sincere Christian loyalty will recognize the central thread that has united my thought with your own thoughts as a community that seeks to nourish itself with God's word. That central thread has been our profound, lengthy reflection on redemption, which we have presented this year under the sign of the covenant between God and humankind.

Following the scriptural readings, we made use of the Sundays of Lent to describe all the preparations that foreshadowed and announced the redemption of humankind. God used the rainbow as a sign to Noah of the first covenant with humankind; it was a sign that human beings were responsible for the natural world. The world would not be destroyed again by a flood, but people had to devote themselves to caring for nature, to sharing its wealth justly, and to preserving the gifts God gives us in nature and not to squander them. We also showed the urgent need to preserve these goods for which we are responsible before God. It is frightening to hear from all parts of the world about the scarcity of gasoline, the contamination of the atmosphere, and the lack of water. There are even sectors of our own capital where water reaches only for a few minutes, and sometimes none at all. They say that the wells are drying up, that those picturesque rivers in our mountains are disappearing. The covenant of humankind with God is not being observed because we who should be caretakers of nature are becoming exploiters of nature.

During the Sundays of Lent we also reflected on the covenant symbolized by circumcision: the covenant with Abraham and then with Moses and then with the prophets, who announced that God would make a new covenant with humankind.

Then came Holy Week, which we presented as the celebration of the covenant that now exists. On Palm Sunday the people went out to meet the Mediator of the new covenant. On Holy Thursday we celebrated love as the law of the covenant; on Good Friday we saw the price of

the covenant, the very life of Christ. On Easter Sunday and during the whole Easter season we celebrated the flower and fruit of the covenant: the Easter joy, life eternal, and the renewal of the world initiated by the risen Christ.

And so last Sunday we arrived at the ascension of the Lord, which invited us into a transcendent realm which helps us find meaning in the events of our history and our lives. When people lose sight of the way of the Redeemer, who invites us to consummate the covenant with the supreme Father of all things, they break the alliance with God and try to resolve their problems on their own—and they fail. Finally, today we reach the culmination of all this magnificent season, the feast of the Holy Spirit.

This Sunday, then, we can title this homily «Pentecost, the Coming of the Spirit Who Gives Life to the New Covenant». Today is when the new covenant comes to life. Let us reflect briefly, dear sisters and brothers, on three ideas suggested by today's readings: first, the visible signs of Pentecost; second, the invisible content of those signs; and third, the church as the covenant enlivened by the Spirit.

The visible signs of Pentecost

We heard the signs in today's reading, but first I would like us to reflect on how the church adopts the pedagogy of God in the way she speaks with signs. Signs are a kind of language. If you don't understand a language, then you only hear its sounds and don't know what's being said. The same happens when someone receives the sacraments, which are signs, without a proper catechesis, such as the one that prepared these young people for confirmation today.

The signs are an unknown language that we must learn in order to understand the full meaning of our baptism or our confirmation or any of the sacraments. Love in marriage is not simply the love between a man and a woman; there is a sign value in their love, and they need to discover it in order to live the depths of their marriage. Confirmation is a sign, but it remains an unknown language for those who have not discovered it. What does it mean when the bishop's hand anoints the young person's forehead? If you don't know the meaning of this, it is better not to receive confirmation. Why receive a sign that has no significance?

The same applies if we fail to understand the profound catechesis of Pentecost. Certain signs appear today: a noise in the heavens, a powerful wind, and tongues of fire that come to rest on the apostles and the Virgin (Acts 2:2-3). And the gospel gives us another sign: the risen Christ who breathes upon the apostles (John 20:22). These are all signs. But what does it mean when a man breathes on others? What is the meaning of hurricane winds and tongues of fire? These are the signs of Pentecost.

The invisible content of these signs

Therefore my second reflection is about the invisible content of these signs. We need to discover the meaning of the signs of Pentecost in order to understand the meaning of this great multitude in the cathedral this morning, as well as the meaning of the other communities that are meeting today and those that attend every Sunday Mass. It is what gives meaning to our Christian lives. There is no meaning if we don't discover what has happened this Sunday because under these signs of Christ's breath and the hurricane wind and the fiery tongues there is hidden something very great though it is invisible.

I'm going to reduce the message of Pentecost to these four things: first, the gift of the Spirit; second, the forgiveness of sin, with life restored to sinners; third, faith; and fourth, the ability to go around the world preaching in every language the only message that saves.

First, what is the content of the gift of the Holy Spirit? In a few moments I'm going to place the holy chrism on the forehead of each young man and woman, and I will say, «By this sign receive the gift of the Holy Spirit». What is this gift? The first reading tells us «they were filled with the Holy Spirit» (Acts 2:4). And Christ explains the meaning of his breathing on the disciples with the word: «Receive the Holy Spirit» (John 20:22). These gestures are similar to those in Genesis when God breathes his all-powerful word over the nothingness of chaos: «Let there be light! Let things exist!» And things were created, and God saw that everything was good» (Gen 1:3ff.). Pentecost is a new Genesis. Today a new world is being born. Today the Spirit of God is given as a gift. Blessed are those who understand this because in their hearts eternity has been born. In their hearts has been born the hope for a better world because they no longer allow themselves be overwhelmed by historical, political, and social problems. Now they know that the breath of the Spirit hovers over all world and is bringing forth a life that no one can contain. The Spirit will come! That's why the Council, in commenting on this gift of the Spirit, declares, «The Holy Spirit was sent so that all who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father» (LG 4). What a profound thought! The Spirit comes!

What is this Spirit? It is the Spirit who unites the Father and Son in eternity in a mysterious relationship. «Everything that the Father has is mine, and everything that I have is the Father's» (John 16:15; 17:10). Who creates this absolute communion among the persons of the Blessed Trinity? The unifying force is the Holy Spirit, and that's why the same Spirit that unites Father and Son is communicated to us. Blessed are those who enter into this current that sweeps them away and unites them with the Father and the Son! The Council expresses this with incomparable words: «The Holy Spirit was sent so that all who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father» (LG 4). The Spirit unites us to Christ, and Christ is the Son who is united with the Father. All of us, united by the Spirit in the Son, are one family with the Father. This is the people of God.

Let us not confuse people in general with the people of God. The popular political organizations should not say, «We are the people», but rather «We are part of the people». Likewise, the church cannot be identified with all the people because there are many people who do not believe in this communion of the Spirit. But thank God there are many faithful people who, as the Council says, let themselves be seized by the force of the Spirit so as to be united with Christ, and once united with Christ they have «access to the Father». Starting even in this life, we live in eternity. We do not wait for death in order to possess eternal life. Christians who let themselves be invaded by the Spirit so as to be united to Christ are already living in communion with the Father. Death will be no more than a breaking of the vessel that was concealing this reality.

How beautiful Christian life is when seen in this way, as an outpouring of the gift of the Spirit! My dear young people who are going to be confirmed, this is what is going to happen with you today. You are going to be invaded by the Spirit of God, who is also the Spirit of Christ. You are going to be united to Christ, and in Christ you will be in intimate contact with the Father. You will belong to Christ, and you will grow strong by the force of this divine life.

What is the content of the other signs of Pentecost? Christ said, «Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them» (John 20:23). This expression means that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate source of the whole redemptive force that frees people from sin and makes them children of God by grace. And this redemption has a relation to true human development. Human development is not just freeing destitute people from poverty. If they have truly entered into this process of becoming children of God, then having money doesn't matter—they might just as well be poor. True human development is the process which raises people up and makes them holy. True human development is holiness. The spirit of holiness is given to us precisely to free us from our passions, our idolatries, our sins, our disorders, our self-indulgences, our injustices. Give thanks to God that the church fulfills this duty, and do not become upset when the church points out sin in the world and seeks to free her children from that sin. When the church tells the political forces to stop their abuses and when she tells the economic forces to stop theirs, the church is not meddling but is simply doing her duty. She is ousting sin from the world and guiding people along the true path of development and holiness.

What else do we find in this gift of the Spirit? We find faith. Today's second reading says something that can seem to us ridiculous if we don't understand it: «Nobody can say, "Jesus is Lord", except by the action of the Spirit» (1 Cor 12:3b). Certainly, anyone can say, «Jesus is Lord», but if we understand these words to mean a strong profession of faith, then they logically lead us to adore Jesus alone. That means I must avoid committing adultery in my heart by saying that I confess Jesus as Lord but then worship the idols of wealth and social forces and earthly materialism. It would be better for many people not to say that they are Christians, because they don't have faith. They have more faith in their money and in their things than in the God who created those things and that wealth. That is why only those who have faith can say, «Jesus is Lord». And the Spirit gives us that faith. No one can say with logical conviction, «Jesus is the one and only God», or «Jesus is the Lord», except the person who has been wrapped in the mantle of faith and anointed with this knowledge that God alone possesses. When Peter responded to Christ's question: «Who do people say that I am?» he mentioned the various opinions he had heard: «Some say you are a prophet or a great philosopher or a great man». Christ answered, «That doesn't satisfy me. You have lived with me a long while now and have heard the words of revelation from me—who do you say that I am?» Peter raised his voice and said, «You are the Christ, the Son of the living God». Peter said «Jesus is Lord», and so Christ congratulated him: «Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, because what you have said was not revealed to you by flesh and blood. Only the Spirit of God, my Father, has been able to inspire that faith in my divine person» (Matt 16:13-17).

Only those who have faith and are inspired by the Spirit can believe in Christ. That is why I tell you sadly, due to sad experience, that there are many who call themselves Christian and who pray to Christ, but they do not recognize him as Lord because they are Christians without faith. We have among us many baptized and confirmed pagans, people who have received the signs but who have not studied the content of the signs. They have not let themselves be invaded by the Spirit; to the contrary, they have rejected the Spirit. If there is anything about my ministry that makes me sad, it is the rejection I often experience, as if I wanted to do people harm and not good. My only consolation is that Christ also was

misunderstood although his only wish was to communicate this great truth. They called him a rebel and sentenced him to death, just as they have threatened me in recent days².

What else does the Spirit give us? This reality of Pentecost is a marvelous thing for us to understand! «How is it that we hear them speaking in our own language even though they are Galilean Jews?» (Acts 2:7-8). This is the gift of preaching throughout the universe. That same miracle is happening today because what I'm saying here in the Cathedral of San Salvador with my poor Spanish is also being said in North America in English by the preachers at the Sunday Masses. And it's also being said in our indigenous languages by the missionaries who enter into the forests of Guatemala or Colombia or any part of our southern hemisphere. And it's also being said in French in Canada and in France by the priests in those regions, and in Italian and in the countless dialects of Africa. It is the same church that is preaching the message of God in many languages this morning and every morning, and it is a message we cannot alter.

It's quite amusing. This week I received accusations from both extremes: the extreme right says that I am a communist³, and the extreme left says that I am moving toward the right⁴. I am with neither the right nor the left. I am trying to be faithful to the word that the Lord sends me to preach, faithful to the unchangeable message that tells both sides the good they do and the injustices they commit. And I think we've given very clear testimony about the gift of the Spirit to which I try to be faithful. The Spirit gives us the ability to be able to identify the true church, and only ill-intentioned people can identify the church with other tongues and languages, with the Babylon of our time where everyone tries to claim the victory and where everyone, even those whose claims are just, is a rival of everyone else. How clear is the voice of the church! She even repeats the words Christ spoke one day: «I cannot preach to you anything else but this. That is why I tell you to leave me if you wish». Peter then responded, «To whom shall we go, Lord? You alone have the words of eternal life» (John 6:67-68). Don't be bothered, sisters and brothers, by the deficiencies that a preacher may have, but rather ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to understand the message that he desires to bring in the name of the Gospel and of Jesus Christ.

The church is the new covenant enlivened by the Spirit

Now my third and final thought about Pentecost: the church is the new covenant enlivened by the Spirit. The Pentecost of twenty centuries was simply the inauguration of a new era, the messianic era that had already been announced by the prophets. It was a new era inspired by the Spirit, and the centuries that have followed since Christ are called the times of the Spirit.

These are the times when the church is seen as a sign, as a seed, as a force of God that unites people together. The Council tells us that we should not be frightened if the church seems to be a small group in comparison with the vastness of humanity (LG9), for Christ told us, «Do not be afraid, little flock, because to you has been given the kingdom of God» (Luke 12:32). We should feel a holy pride because we possess in our church the seed of a new world, the power of hope, and a bright light that illumines every darkness and every shadow. The

² In his pastoral diary (1 June 1979) Archbishop Romero relates that he received phone calls and a note from the White Warriors Union threatening him with death unless he changed his preaching. See *Monseñor Oscar A. Romero, Su diario*, San Salvador 2000, 188.

³ The Freedom or Slavery Patriotic Association published a statement which accused Archbishop Romero of being a «spokesperson for a Marxist team that controls him and manipulates him». *La Prensa Gráfica* (30 May 1979).

⁴ No statement of the left-wing organizations to this effect has been found in this week's papers.

church is a sign of the presence of God who has begun a new creation with the breath of the risen Christ: «Receive the Holy Spirit» (John 20:22).

That is why I would like to focus on today's second reading, which speaks of the unity in diversity that is a remarkable aspect of the church. Let me explain: since there is only one Spirit, some people are given one charism while others are given another; some people receive one vocation while others receive another. On Seminary Day, which is today, we should remember this. There are young people who are called to the consecrated life, and there are young people who are not called to that life, but they are still called to be Christians. They may be engineers, doctors, lawyers, workers, farmers, market vendors, housewives—the job doesn't matter; what matters is what today's reading says, «We all drink of the same Spirit» (1 Cor 12:13). The Spirit gives unity. Saint Paul draws a comparison with the body. Just as the body has organs with very diverse functions, but they all work together for the unity of the organism, so the Holy Spirit has given us different gifts, vocations, and charisms, but they all work together toward unity (1 Cor 12:12). Toward unity! Let us not divide ourselves! If I don't understand another Christian, I must still respect that person because if he truly loves the church, then he is seeking the unity that I also am seeking from my perspective. The important thing is that my love for the church be sincere and that I not criticize her simply because she doesn't accommodate my wishes. It is I who have to accommodate myself to the will of the Holy Spirit, who is the unity and life of this church.

I feel optimism when I think of you young people who are to be confirmed and you young men in the seminary. You are like a breath of fresh air for the church. Who can describe the treasures that each of you possesses if you allow yourselves to be impelled by the Spirit of God? Do not destroy the ideals that God has for the lives of each of you. May the seminarians become holy priests according to the heart of God, may some lay folk obtain diplomas or professional degrees in the university, and may others become humble laborers or *campesinos*. It doesn't matter what your work is as long as you are an instrument of the Holy Spirit in the place where you are to live your lives.

Life of the church

It is from this perspective that we view the reality of our community, and I really want to feel that I am a member of this community here today, the third of June, 1979. This is our Pentecost today: it is all of us, caught in a difficult situation that can sorely test our ability to be open to the Holy Spirit.

Yesterday the pope, as the head of this people of God, journeyed to Poland. In the center of Warsaw, after a representative of the communist government welcomed him and told him that they were working for peace and the unification of the country, the pope expressed his concern regarding respect for human rights. He stated, «There can be no peace without freedom!»⁵ This is the voice of the church! (Applause) The same Spirit is inspiring the pope both in his universal role and there in Poland, where the Christian community is subject to communist authorities. The pope acts with the same holy liberty as he does in a country like Mexico, where he spoke about things related to our Latin American realities. This is the same

⁵ In the discourse referred to by Archbishop Romero we cannot find the quotation he mentions. See «Greeting of John Paul II Arriving at the Airport of Okecie», 2 June 1979, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (10 June 1979).

Spirit that must cry out in other situations, «Never should those who fight against the church's freedom call themselves Christians!»

It is this same Holy Spirit that is inspiring the young men who are being renewed in our seminaries. On this Day of the Seminary I recommend that you reflect on the responses the seminarians have given in the newspaper *Orientación*⁶. When asked, «Why do you want to be a priest?» one of them said, «To be able to save the people from sin and lead them along the path of Christ». Another said, «To be able to respond faithfully to the call of the Lord, which I am clarifying in the process of my formation process». Another said, «To promote justice among individuals and in society, to work for peace and unity by promoting fraternity and by giving my love and my life to God and to my sisters and brothers». Another said, «Because I want to run the risk that very few young people are willing to take». Listen to this, young friends. The vocation to the priesthood does not mutilate people; to the contrary, I think the ideals of young people are mutilated more by living in the world, especially in certain social spheres. I was delighted to hear those words: «... to run the risk that very few young people are willing to take, because I want to be a sign of unity among the people of God and proclaim the Good News to those in need. In this way I will make Christ and his Gospel present in the world in a more complete and committed manner.» Notice that another seminarian says, «At this time the priesthood is for some a scandal and for others foolishness». This seminarian is identifying himself with the cross, of which Saint Paul said, «It is a scandal for the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles» (1 Cor 1:23). And so with the other seminarians.

On this Seminary Day I also want to express gratitude for the encouraging words that have arrived from other seminaries. A student from Saint Philip of Jesus Seminary in Los Angeles, California, expresses the admiration they have for our archdiocese and promises to pray for peace in El Salvador. Ramón Roldén from Immaculate Conception Seminary in New York writes, «Although we have never met, I admire your struggle which is important for today's world, where fear and injustice dominate the lives of many people. I will pray for you and your people every day». Seminarians, together with priests, religious, and lay people from San José, Costa Rica—some 250 in all—have also sent a testimony of solidarity: «We join the world opinion which condemns the institutionalized violation of human rights. We express our solidarity with you and your church in denouncing a situation of sin that cries out to heaven, and we support the liberating pastoral commitment of your archdiocese».

Our community has experienced some very consoling events in these days. In order not to abuse your time, I will refer only to the reflection session that the sisters dedicated to analyzing the case of the Guadalupe Sisters who were removed from Arcatao and deceitfully deported to Guatemala. Thank God, the government has corrected its error even though it continues to accuse them without making clear what the exact charges are. I want to state that the sisters have the complete support of their archbishop and what they are preaching is in no way contrary to the message the church wants preached today. Likewise, I want to defend Father Modesto Villarán of Soyapango and Father José Luis Burguet as faithful collaborators whom I know very well. I refuse to believe the vile calumnies about them that have been published in these days⁷.

⁶ «Why do I want to be a priest?» in *Orientación* (3 June 1979).

⁷ *La Prensa Gráfica* (30 and 32 May 1979).

I also lament, and as a community we lament the tragic death of Father Cabanillas, the pastor of San Jacinto, who died in an traffic accident near Santa Rosa de Lima.

I also want to congratulate several communities of religious sisters and lay people who are promoting prayer. There is much prayer in our diocese. There is no doubt that the Spirit of God will know how to respond to this prayer, which I experience as a vital force in the pastoral ministry of our archdiocese. I take advantage of this feast of the Holy Spirit to remind you that the Spirit prays in our hearts the most beautiful prayer that can rise toward heaven because it is inspired in us by the same Spirit of God. As one religious community told me, «We pray often for you so that you may be given the gift of discernment». That is what is most needed now: to know how to discern between what is good and what is evil, between what is true and what is deceitful and ambiguous. With the help of the Holy Spirit I think that we are carrying out this task, which is difficult but very consoling when accompanied by much prayer.

Events of the week

You know that the cathedral and the church of El Calvario were occupied in recent days by the FAPU. I want to express my support for what Monsignor Modesto López has said: the church is certainly for the people, but it has a purpose, which is prayer. We don't want this mission of the church to be waylaid by other, profane purposes.

Many people are asking about the efforts to repair YSAX. While they continue, I ask you to remain in contact with the thinking of the archdiocese through our newspaper *Orientación* and through the bulletins that are being sent to all the pastors so that they can be read at all their Masses.

This week has also been characterized by violence and tension: the kidnapping of Miguel Miguel⁸, the murder of the Swiss delegate⁹, the murder of several union leaders¹⁰ and also of leaders of the teachers' movement¹¹. If we add up the violent deaths during May, we find that 115 persons have been killed; they include members of the security forces, of ORDEN, of the BPR, and other groupings, as well as of passersby. The number of people who are being found dead on the roadside has increased tragically. Our Legal Aid Commission has had to travel to many places to help families—at least ten so far—to identify exhumed bodies. The legal aid people say that soon, instead of defending the living, they may be only disinterring the dead.

There were also fifty-five persons arrested this month, and thirty of them are now listed among the disappeared. This is a sad reality in our country. The mother of one disappeared person has a serious heart problem, and yet she finds no response to her question: «Where is my son?»

⁸ Miguel Armando Miguel, owner of the Mike Mike store, was kidnapped on 29 May 1979. *La Prensa Gráfica* (30 May 1979).

⁹ Hugh Wey, chargé d'affaires for Switzerland in El Salvador, was killed on 30 May 1979. *La Prensa Gráfica* (31 May 1979).

¹⁰ Mercedes Recinos, director of the National Trade Union Federation of Salvadoran Workers (FENASTRAS) was killed on 28 May 1979. *La Crónica del Pueblo* (28 May 1979).

¹¹ ANDES issued a statement announcing a strike as a sign of grief for the murder of eleven teachers belonging to the organization. *La Crónica del Pueblo* (2 June 1979).

Ninety-two wounded, sixty-four vehicles burned, and twenty-eight businesses burned, machine-gunned, stoned, destroyed. Among these is the General Supervision of Electrical Services. I had the distinct impression that the services of many of these businesses are for the good of the people and provide their employees a means for supporting their families. Such indiscriminate violence, which takes advantage of the turbulent conditions to carry out acts of vengeance, is totally irrational.

We call upon the government not to abuse the state of siege. What is the meaning of the law if it's true that all the people attending a wake service were arrested and only the deceased person was left?¹² This is evidence of legalism which subjects people to laws but forgets the great humanistic principle: «The law exists for people, not people for the law» (Mark 2:27). (Applause)

Given this situation of a week of violence, I issued a statement¹³ in which I made special reference to foreigners, thinking of the murder of the delegate of the Swiss embassy and the situation of the diplomats in the French embassy. I reminded people of the following: «There is no justification for these violent actions against foreigners who are sent here to maintain and strengthen the bonds of friendship between their people with ours. Our relations with these diplomats have always been characterized by hospitality, and they should not be pressured to violate their principles of non-intervention». But I also advised the diplomatic corps that «they have other powers by which they can collaborate with our people in the just defense of human rights. These rights go beyond the limits of non-intervention precisely because, as human, they are universal and are explicitly affirmed by all civilized peoples».

I also spoke about the citizens of other countries who come to work with us: «Great benefit would result for us if they joined us in realizing the desire expressed at Puebla: “They can help us magnanimously to overcome the barriers of our underdevelopment while respecting our culture, our principles, our sovereignty, our identity, and our natural resources. In this spirit we will grow together as sisters and brothers of the same universal family”».

In this statement I also spoke about the many disappeared persons, saying that the church always offers a word of hope: «The solution to the evident deterioration in the sociopolitical situation of the country will not be found through the violence of social injustice, the violence of repression, or the violence of demands motivated by pride, vengeance, or resentment. The only effective way out of the present impasse is for us to return sincerely to justice, love, and respect for human rights. Mutual understanding will be achieved when all Salvadorans are invited to participate without partiality in true dialogue and when the foundations of credibility are reestablished by means of deeds that restore the confidence that has been lost». And I especially ask all of you as Christians to put the force of your prayer in practice, with confidence in the God who can make all things new.

I therefore conclude by reminding you that we are celebrating this feast of the Spirit who renews the world and that our country should not despair. On this day when the gates of heaven open up to send down on us that breath of God, let us open our hearts to hope, and let each of us be a collaborator with God in bringing about peace, love, and justice. I say this

¹² *La Crónica del Pueblo* (28 May 1979).

¹³ «That is Not the Path. Foreigners are also Our Family», 30 May 1979, in *Orientación* (3 June 1979). The texts in quotation marks are taken directly from that message, which was published in *La Prensa Gráfica* (1 June 1979).

especially to the young people who are today celebrating this feast of the Holy Spirit, to the seminarians, and above all to those who are going to come forward to receive holy confirmation. (Applause)