

SYNOD  
OF  
BISHOPS

POPE PAUL VI

Address at Opening  
of Synod

Address at First  
Working Session

Address closing  
the Synod

Message Of Synod  
To Lay Apostolate Congress

September 29-October 29, 1967



ADDRESS  
AT THE OPENING  
OF THE  
SYNOD OF BISHOPS

September 29, 1967

Venerable Brothers,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In greeting you, we express our great esteem for you, our joy in welcoming you and our happiness at seeing you gathered around us once again. In the episcopal synod, whose first meeting we are beginning today, we see you as the chosen representatives of the whole hierarchy of the Catholic Church as pastors of the entire People of God. We greet you, dearly beloved brothers; we greet the churches you come from; your presence here and your charity is the noble sign of the wonderful union they have with one another, which truly forms in a mystical manner the bond of God's holy Church. We thank you for giving expression to the feelings they all have, for showing as chosen representatives of the hierarchy your devotion and affection for us, and for declaring your resolve to work at all times with one accord for God's glory

and the world's salvation. This expression merits our acclaim and our gratitude, it matches your goodness and your awareness of your mandate. Our blessing goes with it.

You know the task we are about.

We have celebrated together the Eucharistic sacrifice which for its excellence is called "*mysterium fidei*" and "*mysterium caritatis*." No other name can be given to this wonderful sacrament whereby we, pilgrims in time, have Christ's real presence in our midst in the bloodless representation of His redemptive sacrifice. No knowledge other than belief in His word gives us certainty of such a lofty reality; no explanation gives us any adequate understanding of such a great gift save the unbounded charity of Christ who instituted it and our own humble charity which tries to answer His in all it implies of love bringing union and spreading to others without limit. It is the Mass, this celebration of our repeated good fortune enabling us to have an encounter with Christ not only by way of commemoration, symbol and promise, but principally by way of true living communion also, though this is hidden and expressed in sacramental signs; it is our strength, our food and happiness; it is our joy, lowly yet blessed, which allows us in the wearying vicissitudes of earth to have an inexpressible foretaste of life in heaven; it is our daily encounter in the sign of His cross with Christ glorious at the right hand of the Father; it is Christ's power at work, bringing together in the unity of His Mystical Body those who partake of Him, the one bread of the multitude of the faithful.

Why are we saying all this when it is already so familiar and dear to you?

The reason is that we think it can be and should be uppermost in our minds in circumstances such as these which call us to a full lively profession of faith and love.

Now, two years after the termination of the Ecumenical Council, we are, as we promised, gathered once again in this sacred building for a twofold purpose: to honor by the offering of our faith the centenary commemoration of the martyrdom of Sts. Peter

and Paul, and to enkindle our charity in view of an auspicious first meeting of the synod of bishops. These purposes of ours are not without manifest reference to the Council itself. While not possessing the Council's solemnity and power, this gathering of so eminent and authoritative a number of bishops with the humble successor of St. Peter, has nevertheless some principal objectives of its own. Foremost among these is the preservation and strengthening of the Catholic faith, its integrity, its strength, its development, its doctrinal and historical coherence and the acknowledgment of the faith as the indispensable foundation of the Christian life which is the cause and *raison d'être* of the Church. We cannot forget the solemn words with which our predecessor of venerable memory, John XXIII, opened the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and determined the lofty and essential aim to which it was committed:

“The 21st Ecumenical Council, which will draw upon the effective and important wealth of juridical, liturgical, apostolic and administrative experiences, wishes to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion, which throughout 20 centuries, notwithstanding difficulties and contrasts, has become the common patrimony of men. It is a patrimony not well received by all, but always a rich treasure available to men of good will. . . . Now it is necessary for all the teaching of the Church in its entirety to be accepted with a fresh enthusiasm by all, with serenity and tranquillity, in the precision of language and formulation handed down to us which is to be seen most clearly in the acts of the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

The solicitude for doctrinal fidelity, which was so solemnly declared at the beginning of the recent Council, must therefore direct our postconciliar times. More watchfulness is required on the part of those who in the Church of God have from Christ the mandate to teach, to spread His message and to guard the “deposit” of faith, in proportion as the dangers which today threaten her are more numerous and serious; immense dangers caused by the irreligious orientation of the modern mentality, and insidious dangers which even from within the Church find utterance in the

work of teachers and writers, desirous, it is true, of giving new expression to Catholic doctrine but frequently desirous rather of adapting the dogma of the faith to secular thought and language, than of adhering to the norm of the Church's magisterium.

Thus they allow free rein to the opinion that one may forget the demands of orthodoxy and select from among the truths of the faith those which instinctive personal preference finds admissible, rejecting the others, as if the rights of moral conscience, free and responsible for its acts, may be claimed in preference to the rights of truth, foremost among which are the rights of divine revelation<sup>2</sup> and to the opinion that one may subject to revision the doctrinal heritage of the Church to give Christianity new ideological dimensions, far different from the theological dimensions outlined by genuine tradition with immeasurable respect for God's own thought. Faith, as we know, is not the result of an arbitrary or merely naturalistic interpretation of the Word of God, as it is not religious expression arising from the collective opinion without authoritative guidance, of those who claim to be believers, nor, much less, acquiescence in the philosophical or sociological trends of the passing historical moment. Faith is adherence with our entire spiritual being to the wonderful and merciful message of salvation communicated to us by the luminous yet hidden ways of revelation; faith is not only search, but also, and principally, certainty; and more than the result of our inquiry faith is a mysterious gift which demands docility and responsiveness to the majestic dialogue of God which speaks to our souls if they are attentive and trustful.

For this reason we considered the safeguarding of the faith so imperative after the close of the Council that we invited the whole Church to celebrate a "year of faith" in honor of the two Apostles, the chief teachers and witnesses of Christ's Gospel. The purpose of this year is to meditate on the very faith handed down to us and to assess in the modern context the decisive function this fundamental virtue has for the stability of our religion and the vitality of the Church, for building up God's kingdom in souls, for ecumenical dialogue and the genuine contact for renewal that

Christ's followers intend to make with the world of today. We want in this way to strengthen our own faith as teachers, witnesses and pastors in God's Church, so that Christ, her sole and supreme Head, Christ living and invisible, may find it humble, sincere and strong. We want also to strengthen the faith of our children, especially those who pursue the study of theology and religion, so that with a renewed and watchful awareness of the Church's unalterable and certain teaching they may give wise collaboration to furthering the sacred sciences and to upholding the sacred aim of Catholic teaching, giving life through light.

This, Venerable Brothers, is the reason for our invitation to you to join us in celebrating the "*mysterium fidei*" over the tomb of Peter the Apostle, beside his unworthy but true successor, to experience once again the secret inspiring charism of the faith and see its demanding obligations which are a source of strength.

Then from the "*mysterium caritatis*," the radiance from the Eucharistic sacrifice, we must reach the spirit and try to penetrate the inner meaning of the second purpose which has brought us together here, a purpose of great significance, since it is something new and has repercussions on the life of the Church, we mean the opening of the *Synodus Episcoporum*.

It is not our intention to speak now of this new institution; we have already stated its nature and purpose in our *Motu Proprio "Apostolica sollicitudo"* of Sept. 15, 1965<sup>3</sup> and tomorrow we shall have occasion to add some account of the canonical aspect.

Here today we need only indicate its spiritual source and the moral value it intends to assume. On this point we said that this new instrument of the Church's visible government must be seen as deriving immediately from the recent Council. It was during the Council that we instituted it and the Council virtually brought it into being. In the Council the need was seen for the Catholic episcopacy, whose collegiality was made plain in the Council's constitutional document on the Church, not merely to be united more closely but to be united more closely in action; just as we had already seen the evident pressing need of making wider and more

systematic use of the cooperation and counsel of our brothers in the episcopacy for the pastoral government of the Church herself, made more easy nowadays when travel facilities are so vastly improved.

Accordingly this *Synodus Episcoporum* aims to be a *ministry of charity* within the Church. Its true foundation is in the *mystery of charity*, as we choose to call the Eucharistic sacrifice. This is shown, we think, by the fact that it was during His last paschal meal that Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke those memorable words, which form the synthesis of His Gospel: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another".<sup>4</sup> To these divine words we can add, as a commentary, those well-known striking words of Paul the Apostle: ". . . we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."<sup>5</sup>

This reminds us that the Church is a communion, a society based on faith and on charity. We have spoken about faith. What do we have to say about charity in relation to the topic that concerns us now? We shall say that it is always opportune to remember that charity—love which is from God and which spreads in the hearts of believers enabling them to love as Christ has loved them—is a vital and constitutive principle of holy Church, which is held together interiorly not by bonds of blood, of territory or culture, not by political ties or by interests, but by love. And we would add one question: Can this love increase in the Church of God? We answer immediately recalling the many vicissitudes of such love in the history and institutions of the Church: Certainly it can; and it must. The Church needs to love herself from within, to love herself more. Let us put it this way: those who make up the Church, and much more those who represent her and direct her, must feel that in these days they are more firmly united among themselves with that intangible but powerful bond which is the love taught, commanded and given by Christ. "Let the bounds of charity be widened."<sup>6</sup> If that was well said we may also add: let *the bonds* of charity be drawn tight.



For the problems of every kind which the Church encounters in our time, and for the increasing effort which she feels she has to make generously for the spread of the kingdom of God and the welfare of humanity, the Church should give herself this remedy, this strength: grow in the love which designates her as Christian and which makes of her members "one heart and soul."<sup>7</sup> What a wonderful thing it is, if it is so in fact, that those whom the Holy Spirit has placed as bishops to rule the Church of God<sup>8</sup>, should be concerned to allow themselves to become more active channels of the charity of Christ, to give to their profession of charity a new expression and assume a new institutional pattern.

This is what the *Synodus Episcoporum* is to be. May God help us then to make it in practice what it aims to be in its intention and inspiration—as we have said—the ministry of charity flowing from the mystery of charity.

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<sup>1</sup> AAS, LIV, 1962. pp. 791-792.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gal. 1, 6-9.

<sup>3</sup> AAS, LVII, 1965, pp. 775-80.

<sup>4</sup> John 13: 34-5.

<sup>5</sup> I Cor. 10:17.

<sup>6</sup> Aug. Sermo 69, P.L. V, 440.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 4:32.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Acts 20:28.

ADDRESS  
AT FIRST WORKING  
SESSION OF  
SYNOD OF BISHOPS

September 30, 1967

Let give thanks to God our almighty Father, through Jesus Christ His Son, Our Lord, in the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, for allowing us to celebrate this first meeting of the *Synodus Episcoporum* for the glory of His most holy name, the benefit of the holy Catholic Church and the support of her mission of salvation in the world.

Venerable Brothers, we welcome you once again and, for the encouragement of all, repeat our wish that this new institution, the *Synodus Episcoporum*, may serve to strengthen and reinforce the bonds of faith, charity and pastoral action between our apostolic office and that of the entire Catholic episcopacy, and likewise between bishops and religious families. The first purpose in establishing this new instrument of the Church's pastoral government is unity and solidarity in the Catholic hierarchy. Another purpose

is the help, advice and opinions that we hope to have in greater measure from the episcopacy in the exercise of our ministry. If this is advantageous to the office of primacy which Christ, for the benefit and service of the universal Church, committed to Peter the Apostle and after him to his lawful successors in this Roman See, it serves no less to do honor to the college of bishops which in this way is associated to a degree with the Roman Pontiff in the care of the universal Church.

For this reason the *Synodus Episcoporum* while it cannot be considered an ecumenical council, since it does not have the membership, authority and aims proper to it, does nevertheless resemble a council to some extent; it reflects its spirit and method and, please God, obtains the council's own charisms of wisdom and charity.

We say this, because you, Venerable Brothers, are representatives in more ways than one: you represent your own individual churches, of whose unity you are the prime source, as we are by God's will in this Church of Rome, and at the same time you represent the universal Church, the entire episcopacy and all the faithful;<sup>1</sup> and to you as "angels"<sup>2</sup> of your churches we extend a warm welcome.

Then you represent (most of you) the episcopal conferences which have elected you as members of this synod; as their elected representatives you give them a canonical presence here, echo their aspirations and voice their experience; your role as their representatives assumes the importance and authority of these ecclesiastical bodies, the episcopal conferences, to which the Ecumenical Council gave greater prominence and a part to play which makes as much for a relative and practical juridical decentralization and a certain diversity of expression in the Church, appropriate to the tradition and character of the local church, as it does for the organic strengthening of the Catholic Church's own structure based on unity. So we shall take account of the opinions expressed by your own episcopal conferences. It is for you to interpret them here, without prejudice, of course, to the higher duty you all have of following at all times the authority of holy

Scripture, the true tradition of the Church and her authentic magisterium; and this will not prevent us from evaluating in the synod's discussions the opinions and reasons adopted.

Lastly, you represent the whole hierarchy of the Catholic Church, which in its turn represents Christ Our Lord, the one, supreme, invisible Head of Holy Church from whom every grace is given to us, from whom all our power is derived. And in a certain sense you represent, as you know, the Christian people, not that the mandate you have received derives from it, but because, as Christ's representatives among the people, you know its needs and wishes and work for its spiritual welfare and Christian salvation.

So, Venerable Brothers, although your normal role in this *Synodus Episcoporum* is consultative,<sup>3</sup> it is, nevertheless, one of great authority, both for ourselves, who have called you to this present consultation and will, in particular cases, give deliberative force to your opinions; and no less so for the entire Church, which acknowledges you as leaders, witnesses and pastors of the People of God who are at a moment of significance and importance in your exalted ministry.

It will be good for all of us to bear these simple considerations in mind as we set ourselves to the work of the synod, without delaying to seek a more precise and detailed definition of the synod's nature than the description given in the statute we have referred to. There are not a few scholars and publicists eager to analyze the juridical aspects of this institution and to determine, as far as they can, its form and function, according to certain new concepts of the Church's constitutional law. But it is enough for us to reflect how this new organ, at the very heart of the Church, is in harmony with that spirit of union and collaboration between the Apostolic See, the Catholic episcopacy and the major superiors of religious families, which the Council experienced and fostered, and to observe that it is the intention of this synod to further the exchange of information and experience concerning the life of the Church, affording the heads of the

Roman congregations and the representatives of the different ecclesiastical bodies the opportunity of meeting and of discussing certain subjects of general interest. Finally it suffices for us to note that it aims at arousing in all who have the responsibility of teaching and of pastoral government in the Church of God the spirit of watchfulness and diligence that present time requires.

We might at this point set the work of the synod in motion without further delay, were it not for a number of preliminary remarks that we think should be made.

The first concerns the absence of some members of the synod. Some were detained by reason of sickness. Others were prevented from attending because they had not obtained due permission of the civil authorities. To the former we send our best wishes and greetings. They are in our thoughts.

To the latter, and especially to Cardinal Wyszyński, archbishop of Warsaw, and with him to Cardinal Wojtyła, archbishop of Cracow, and to the Polish bishops, who in solidarity did not want to go to Rome without their primate, we send cordial and special greetings. This we do, not without expressing our strong sense of regret because of the obstacle put in the way of such a harmless voyage and because of the unjust conditions imposed on the Church in various countries, where legitimate freedom is still denied her, where the Church is the object of unjustified suspicions, of moral and legal pressures, and an ever fierce anti-religious opposition.

You know, Venerable Brothers, how much Catholic life in some nations is restricted in its vital needs, both organizational and functional, and deliberately reduced to hardship and to danger of gradual extinction. The hour of trial, of a long and painful trial, weighs heavy on many a Christian community. It indicates to the world how the basic principles of justice and freedom, proper to modern civilization, have not been applied sincerely in some nations where forms of government that are authoritarian, frequently totalitarian, and in practice hostile to religion, have the upper hand. All the more should we appreciate those societies in which the presence and the work of the Church can be affirmed

freely and openly. Thus we should feel all the more closely united with our brothers who cannot profess their faith in freedom, but who, in silent patience and with Christian fortitude, at times heroic, persevere in their adhesion to Christ and His Church. We shall not forget them in our prayers. In the meantime may the thoughts and wishes of this present assembly go to these brothers of ours.

The second observation looks to the Christian brothers still separated from us. The canonical and, as it were, internal character of the synod of bishops, that is, a meeting which in both method and purpose is directed to internal questions of the Catholic Church, has not allowed them to be invited, as they were during the Ecumenical Council, to be present at the sessions of the synod of bishops. But let us make two points immediately. The first: the consideration of the effects which our forthcoming meetings will have upon these same Christian brothers is not, and should never be, absent during the course of our labors. In fact, the calling of the synod has of itself great ecumenical importance, in proportion as the synod, following the lines of the Council, gives testimony that in the life of the Catholic Church there is active the time-honored synodal institution, which has been so well utilized in the Oriental tradition, and which will strengthen, in a new way adapted to our time, the bonds that exist between the Church of Rome, "which holds the primacy of charity"<sup>4</sup>, and the various local churches.

Furthermore, some Christian churches and church communities which are not in full communion with us are watching us with interest and hoping that the deliberations of this synod, the manner in which they are held and the conclusions reached, will open new possibilities for further progress in the ecumenical dialogue already begun.

We are sure, Venerable Brothers, that remaining constant in the "faith once for all delivered to the saints"<sup>5</sup>, and drawing from its treasures what is new and what is old<sup>6</sup>, you will live up to these expectations.

For this reason, the synod will consider that each of the subjects included in the order of the day is important not only for the internal life of the Catholic Church, but also for the holy cause of Christian unity.

And the second point is this: the wish, ever respectful, ever cordial, ever Christian, that we address at the opening of this *Synodus Episcoporum* to all the Christian churches and all the Christian communities with whom, though not yet bound by the perfect communion we wish for, we are united spiritually and substantially by so many bonds of great value—the wish that we may be able to go forward toward one another to full unity, in faith and charity, as Our Lord Jesus Christ exhorted us. This going forward is well under way. Recently, as you know, the first part of our ecumenical directory was published; significant ecumenical dialogues are taking place between designated representatives of various Christian denominations with representatives designated by us; with great emotion and great hope last July we journeyed to Istanbul to meet with His Holiness, the Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras. In fact, we are able to tell you that this venerable Patriarch has announced his return visit, which is planned for the end of this next month of October: you, Venerated Brothers, will be able to be present at this new meeting, which fills the Eastern Church and the Western Church with exultation and inexpressible hope.

Finally, one last observation: peace in the world. A subject of such great and all-embracing importance as world peace cannot escape the attention, the interests and prayers of this gathering, cannot but halt its first important considerations.

We cannot forget, not even in the calm of the sessions how this peace is being seriously violated and dangerously undermined. Without interruption a bloody war is being waged in Southeast Asia; another in the Middle East is being barely held in check by a fragile truce; we see conflicts still out of control and guerrilla operations in various parts of the world. Despite so many resolute

and most praiseworthy efforts, a state of general insecurity seems to be abroad in the world that inevitably foreshadows other misfortunes.

This is not the time to enter into an analysis of the causes and remedies for this present state. But we wish to reaffirm not only that peace is a necessary good and an interest common to all, but that it is a duty incumbent in varying degrees upon all. To this duty we call in the first place the followers of Christ, who brings universal brotherhood founded in the fatherhood of God, and who is, therefore, the Prince of Peace. We urge them to contribute still more to the cause of peace by their prayers and their endeavors, and to form individual consciences and those of communities to true peace. We shall not confine our concrete activity on behalf of peace to public statements or demonstrations; but shall devote ourselves in every way possible to proclaim and promote a peace never divorced from justice and public order or from freedom of citizens both individually and as nations.

Even on this occasion we make bold to repeat our request to those who control the destinies of nations. We ask them to be ever watchful and understand the anguish and destruction that the use of armed force brings in its train; we ask them to enter with ever fresh courage upon the path of negotiations conducted on a basis of justice and sincerity. Let no one scorn attempts at discussion and understanding, and let all make peaceful and successful negotiations their aim and their reward.

We are prepared to support every available genuine initiative for peace, and we voice our encouragement to all who are striving by wise and positive mediation for the harmony and solidarity of peoples and for the peaceful establishment of civilized humane peace in the world.

We are certain, Venerable Brothers, that you are convinced, as we are, of these ideals and that, in the faithful recollection of the noble charity of Christ, you share with us this lofty, unstilled yearning for peace among all men.



But the time is now come for us to declare open, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, this first synod of bishops; and for us to begin by calling on the dean of the Sacred College, Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, to speak.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Apoc. 2 and ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. motu proprio *Apostolica sollicitudo*, art. II.

<sup>4</sup> St. Ignatius of Antioch.

<sup>5</sup> Jude, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 13:52.

ADDRESS  
CLOSING THE  
SYNOD OF BISHOPS

October 29, 1967

We now direct our words especially to you, venerable and beloved brothers, who have taken part in the Synod of Bishops; and we are happy to note how timely and meaningful it is that the conclusion of your great meeting should occur on this festive day, on which the liturgy of the Roman Church prayerfully honors Christ the King.

We think it most fitting that, before your return to your Sees, we should celebrate with concordant voices and intimately united minds this feast, which presents to our eyes so pleasing a vision of light, of grace, and of grandeur; this feast in which Christ is shown to us resplendent with the brilliancy of His God-head, as St. Paul describes Him: "The image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. . . . He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything He might be pre-eminent." <sup>1</sup>

This feast, falling immediately before the commemoration of All Saints, proclaims the praises of Christ and illuminates His

relationship with the Church which He has founded. From these two doctrinal points, inherent in today's feast, we would derive subjects to propose to you at this solemn moment, on the eve of your departure, for your encouragement and consolation.

First of all, we must raise our minds and hearts to the kingly rank of Christ, both to broaden and protect our sure belief in divine things, and also to be animated by an ever more ardent love in our daily lives. Christ is the Son of David, as foretold by Sacred Scripture, to whose coming the patriarchs and prophets looked forward, to whom His very persecutors bore unknowing witness by writing over His cross—then a symbol of shame, later a sign of glory—the title: “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”<sup>2</sup>

As Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, proclaimed on the day of Pentecost: “God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus;<sup>3</sup> for in Him human nature is hypostatically united with the divine nature, and what is more, being both true God and true man, He is the Son of God made flesh; and, since by His passion and death He is the Redeemer of mankind, the authority and power which, as God, He wields over all created things, pertains also by both native and vested right to His human nature.

For we read that St. Paul has written of Him: “(Him the Father) appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature, upholding the universe by His word of power. When He had made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has obtained is more excellent than theirs.”<sup>4</sup> To this universal primacy pertains the principle of unity, of government, of love and of salvation, which is exercised by Him alone, but is also in His merciful wisdom communicated to His Church. For “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed in the world, taken up in glory.”<sup>5</sup>

Hence, as we have said, arise the relationships between Christ's kingly power and His Church. Jesus reigns indeed over the Church, but not yet over the world; although David's ancient prophecy, openly referred to by Christ Himself and in the first preaching of the apostolic age, promises Him sway over all peoples, it still has not come to pass.<sup>6</sup> For it is written: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool."<sup>7</sup> In fact, the powers of darkness strive to retard the spreading of the kingdom of Christ. But this kingdom concerns naught else but the spirit of men, as Christ testified: "My kingship is not of this world."<sup>8</sup> This is the kingdom of truth and life; the kingdom of holiness and grace; the kingdom of justice, love and peace.<sup>9</sup>

This kingdom seeks souls for no other reason than that the word of God should be sown in them as in a fertile field; it seeks men wandering afar to bring them together into one family.<sup>10</sup>

Now, however, the Catholic Church represents among men the royal, prophetic and priestly power of Jesus Christ, since she has received "the mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God. She becomes on earth the initial budding forth of that kingdom."<sup>11</sup> Hence, although the Church is endowed with authority, and this is her great relationship with her divine Founder, and although she has Christ with her, living in her by grace and the word of salvation, and in her continually renewing His sacrifice through the sacrament of the Eucharist, wherein is located her mystical relationship with Christ—yet she is not to be considered a queen, when this title is given a temporal meaning. In fact, she continues among men the mystery of the humility of Christ, who "came not to be served but to serve."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the Church, like Christ, her model and sanctifier, intends to serve men, and by pastoral means to lead them to salvation, sowing in their minds the seeds of life. This is clearly set forth in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of the Second Vatican Council.

Wherefore the grave responsibility falls upon us, the shepherds of the Church, to perform the same duties and offices toward men as the Church herself performs.

As you return to your Sees, then, venerable brothers, remember that you have been sent forth to announce the kingdom of Christ; and that you have been sent forth by Him who once sent forth others, saying: "Preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'";<sup>13</sup> that is to say the kingdom, which, although not fully realized now on earth, will one day become the perfect kingdom of God.

Meditate upon this, venerable brothers, that you are sent in the name of Christ, nay more, by Christ Himself, who said: "Behold, I send you out."<sup>14</sup> Yet consider that you are also shepherds of the Church, and hence that for her we must expend our strength, our care, our solicitude, our labor, our sufferings and, if need be, our lives. Since the synod which we have held aims only at the good of the Church, each one of us must promise, like Paul the Apostle, to "spend and be spent"<sup>15</sup> for the spouse of Christ.

Finally, before you leave us, permit us to give each of you, as a pledge of love, a symbol of union, and a proof of brotherhood, the kiss of peace. We wish also to present to you the gift of a pectoral cross, confident that when you wear it you will remember the days you have spent here with us, and will consider it a bond perpetually uniting yourselves to us and to one another.

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<sup>1</sup> Col. 1:15-16, 18.

<sup>2</sup> John 19:19.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:36.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. 1:2-4.

<sup>5</sup> I Tim. 3:16.

<sup>6</sup> Acts, 2:34-36; Matt. 22:44.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. 109:1.

<sup>8</sup> John 18:36.

<sup>9</sup> Preface of the Feast.

<sup>10</sup> John 11:52.

<sup>11</sup> Constitution on the Church, No. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 20:28.

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 10:7.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 10:16.

<sup>15</sup> II Cor. 12:15.

# MESSAGE OF SYNOD TO LAY APOSTOLATE CONGRESS

It is providential that the Third World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, which is meeting in the context of recent (Second Vatican) Council, is taking place in Rome when the bishops delegated by their brothers in the episcopate are gathered in a synod in response to the call of Pope Paul VI.

These two assemblies are different in character but both are exclusively concerned with the renewal of the "People of God on man's journey." This promises much for the future and is a source of joy to the bishops, who "stand in the midst of the people as those who serve . . . recognizing the duty and right of the faithful to collaborate actively in the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ." <sup>1</sup>

"The bishops too are men, loving and attentive pastors and brothers," <sup>2</sup> and they recognize you as Christians sharing the aspirations of all men and seeking to fulfill them in Christ Jesus.

The needs of the world are ever more urgent as people become more aware of their dignity as men, more aware of the unity

of the human race. But at the very time when the world is witnessing extraordinary progress in the realms of technology and ideas, it also sees hunger, ignorance, injustice, oppression and war continuing to frustrate the most legitimate desires of humanity. In common with all their brothers, Christians have a vocation to look for the social and cooperative remedies that are called for and to apply them. Truth, justice and brotherhood are pathways of light. Thanks to the power of the Gospel, the Church is at the heart of the world to inspire it and to sanctify it.

In this activity, laymen have an irreplaceable role. "The divorce between the faith which many profess and their daily lives must be counted among the more serious errors of our age."<sup>3</sup> It is the unity of life and of faith that gives strength to men's witness. Your apostolate, which you are now studying, is rooted in this power of faith lived in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Discourse of the Holy Father, Dec. 7, 1965.

<sup>1</sup> *Christus Dominus*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 43.

# United States Catholic Conference

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