

# Analysis



Pope John Paul II contemplates the magnificence of Namao at yesterday's mass.

photo by Martin Schug

## The Pope's message

by Rick Warren

Pope John Paul has appealed to Christians to pray and work together in a true spirit of ecumenism to promote a more just and peaceful world.

"True prayer overflows into generous service," the Pope told 1,110 religious leaders and lay representatives Sunday evening at an inter-faith prayer service at St. Joseph's Basilica.

"We (the church) are not unmindful of the great needs of our brothers and sisters who suffer throughout the world," the Catholic Pontiff said in a reference to the Third World. The Third World theme is the major emphasis of his Edmonton visit, and is one of 12 different pastoral themes the Catholic spiritual leader will address during his Canadian tour.

"God is near to all who call upon him: the poor and the dejected, the sorrowing and the lonely, the weak and the oppressed. We believe that God breaks through the silence, and even the noise, of our daily lives revealing to us his truth and his love," he said.

Christ's followers should become, and help one another to, "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," the Pope said.

The Pope's message fulfills the gospel and the social teaching of the church, said Elizabeth Reid, a spokesperson for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. "We cannot preach the gospel without working for justice. It is what we are called to do as Christians," she said.

When the bishops of the world met in the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's, they learned from their fellow bishops in Asia, Africa and Latin America about the grim reality of life for poor people in the Third World, who, throughout their history of colonialism, have been caught between economic domination and political and military oppression.

In 1967, the Bishops of Canada set up the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. The purpose of the organization was to raise funds for socio-economic development projects in the Third World, and to foster a new understanding of the need for international aid among Canadians. Almost 20 years later, the focus of the organization has expanded to provide reliable information on the realities of poverty and oppression in the Third World, strengthen ties between grass-roots organizations in Canada and the Third World, and promote awareness of the teachings of the Gospel on issues of social justice.

Health, Education, rural development, economic development and women's issues are among the projects aimed at eliminating the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment.

The Churches decided to speak out "as one voice" on struggles for justice with the Third World in the 1970's.

On an ecumenical basis, the Churches set up action-research coalitions and sent delegations to international conferences with such

pressing themes as hunger and over-population

The Christian Churches have also pressured the federal government regarding human rights violations in Asian and Latin American countries, met with the prime minister to discuss more effective North-South dialogue, and through the Task Force on Churches and Corporate Responsibility, the Churches decried Canadian-based corporations and financial institutions investing and extending credit to countries known for their lack of respect for human rights.

Church officials say Pope John Paul's emphasis on Third World issues is fulfilling the message the Synod of Bishops set out in their 1971 statement "Justice in the World."

"Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world," they said, "... fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."

John Paul's predecessor Pope Paul VI said it even more clearly in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* when he said: "We want to be fully understood: the present situation must be faced with courage and the injustices linked with it must be fought against and overcome. Development demands bold transformations, innovations that go deep. Urgent reforms should be undertaken without delay."

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