

HOMILY OF FATHER PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH

AT THE FUNERAL OF FATHER PEDRO ARRUPPE: 9.02.1991

"The 'Magnificat' of Father Arrupe"

Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Mr. President of the Council of Ministers
Honorable Ambassadors,
Reverend Fathers and Brothers,
My Sisters and Brothers,

I am deeply grateful to all of you here present for your participation and for your prayers. I feel it my duty, at this moment, to express my profound gratitude to our Holy Father for the personal solicitude and the great affection with which he has never ceased to stay close to our dear Father Arrupe during his long ordeal, and has desired to be present among us today in the person of his representative, his Eminence Cardinal Eduardo Martinez Somalo.

I also feel I must say a special word of thanks to the doctors and infirmarians who for ten years have given the best of their competence and their dedication to helping Father Arrupe in his serious illness.

Finally, I wish to thank the Master General of the Order of Saint Dominic for this service, which according to an ancient tradition, he has wished to render to our departed General. We are here this morning to pray for Father Arrupe, to pray with him and to thank the Lord, as far as possible in Father Arrupe's own words, for having given him to us. When he celebrated his jubilee as a religious and looked back over the seventy years of his life, Father Arrupe said that his wish was that his life should have been, or should from that moment become, a continual Magnificat. His life was such, in fact, and, in God's mercy, will ever be so.

Even though he wished to act always in complete openness, concealing nothing from anyone who questioned him, whether the queries were those of his own fellow-religious or those of journalists, Father Arrupe had to confess that there was within him an area that was hidden, or partly hidden, even from himself: "It is that intimate relationship between God (who is love and who loves each individual in a different way) and the man, who from the depths of his being gives his response, a response that is unique, because it does not have, nor ever will have, another like it." He called this hidden area "the secret of the Trinity's wonderful love, which, when it so wills, bursts into the life of each one." It was this which issued into the three-fold love which marked his every act and word: love of the Society (body for the Spirit), love for the Lord's Church, love for the Christ, God the Father's love. His love for the Society was lived, in truth, as a bursting-in of the Spirit. The unforeseen nature of the different decisive stages and the radical changes of direction in his life, were, as himself said, like powerful shifts of the tiller by which the Spirit of God was steering him: "My vocation to the Society of Jesus, after I had begun the study of medicine and was enjoying it so much, and right in the middle of my university course; my vocation to Japan, a mission for which, before God's call, I had felt no attraction, and which for

ten years my superiors refused to approve; ... my presence in the city on which the first atom bomb fell; my election as General of the Society of Jesus." And to these we must add the sudden illness which permanently paralyzed his boundless activity. "All these events," Father Arrupe continued, "were so sudden and unexpected and yet, at the same time, bore so clearly the 'sign' of God . . . All this makes me desire that my life should have been, or, at least, from now on should be, a continual Magnificat.

On his election as General of the Society of Jesus just at the end of the Second Vatican Council, he, sensitive as he always was to the Spirit, had no other desire than to put this pentecostal gift into effect and to express his love of the Society by transforming it into a body for the Spirit, apt for carrying out with love the Council's apostolic tasks. He set himself wholeheartedly to harmonise the essential and unchangeable requirements of the Society's charism with the needs of the contemporary situation in the life of the Church and the world. A witness of his efforts at that time wrote: "It was a difficult and delicate work and so it was not surprising that opinions were often divided, that his directives were sometimes criticised, especially when abuses followed from their being wrongly interpreted or from exaggerated applications, which he himself many times deplored. But no one criticised, nor could ever criticise, the wholeheartedness with which he gave himself to his task of adapting the life and apostolate of the Society (and also of many other religious families through the Union of Superiors General -- USG) to meet the demands that the Spirit was making, through the Council, for the Church in the world of the day."

As a man at the service of the Council, Father Arrupe realised that, as the extraordinary Synod of 1985 said, in reaching back to the deep sources of tradition nothing is really new and yet, in responding to the Spirit, everything is recreated anew. The Society has not been changed, yet, thanks to the gift of the Spirit which Father Arrupe was, everything is different.

This long labour of eighteen years as General could have made no sense without a profound faith in the Lord's Spirit. For this reason, Father Arrupe felt himself to be close to Abraham, the saintly Father of all who believe. "For me, the figure of Abraham was always an inexhaustible inspiration. 'Where is the Society going?' I would be asked, and my reply was always, 'Where God is leading us'. In other words, I meant, 'I do not know; but one thing I do know, and that is that the Lord is leading us somewhere; let us go on with confidence, with the Church which is guided by the Spirit. I know that God is leading us to a new land, the land of promise, his land. He knows where he is; we have only to follow him.'"

This figure of Abraham was the constant inspiration of his tireless hospitality and his unflagging optimism in the faith. His love for the Society was so deep that he showed it visibly in a love full of human warmth, respect and trust for every Jesuit. Every meeting was profoundly personal. He never spoke a word which was not of encouragement and hope. With no weapon but the faith of holy Abraham he stretched out his bare hands, trusting only in the power of the Spirit, to whom he wished to offer the Society, with love, as an ever ready and available instrument for the service and building up of his Church.

It was in this way that the love for the Society opened out into his love for the Lord's Church, the second of his loves. In his last message to the Society he was able to say: "During these 18 years I have desired nothing else

than to serve the Lord and his Church with all my heart. From the first moment to the last." Trusting to the spiritual renewal of the Society as it returned to the sources of Ignatian spirituality, and trusting to the daily integration of contemplation of the Lord with apostolic activity, he took to heart the great enterprises stemming from the Vatican Council, many of them missions entrusted to the Society by the Vicar of Christ: the challenge of modern unbelief, ecumenism and dialogue, the service of the proclamation of the faith with preferential love of the poor and the promotion of justice, the theological apostolate at the service of the ordinary magisterium of the Church through the modern means of communication, inculturation and the assistance to young Churches, and, even in his final message, an invitation to come to the aid of refugees in their dramatic plight. None of this activity has any sense apart from its being done in the name of the Church, in the Church and with the Church. To fail in faithfulness to the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ, "would be", he said, "like writing one's own death sentence", because it would mean "cutting oneself off from the living circulation of the Spirit, which is that precisely and specifically of the communion -- the koinonia -- with the hierarchical Church, with the Bride of Christ and his Vicar."

Christ, Son of the Father, manifestation of the love of God, is the third love which characterises Father Arrupe's life, according to his own words. All his fellow Jesuits were aware of his devotion to the vision of La Storta. It was his ardent desire, both for himself and for all his brethren, that the Father would place him with the Son, so as to have a part with him in bringing to all men the abundant life of the paschal mystery. And it was close to Christ, present in the Eucharist, that Father Arrupe loved to stay. It is not possible to read unmoved his private notes, for long unpublished, in which he describes his "mini-cathedral: not more than six metres by four . . . , source of incalculable force and dynamism for the whole Society, place of inspiration, of consolation, of strength; a place in which to 'stay' . . . ; a room in which rest from labour is most industrious, where doing nothing does everything . . . It is called," Father Arrupe goes on, "the General's private chapel. It is cathedra and shrine, Tabor, Gethsemani, Bethlehem and Golgotha, Manresa and La Storta. Always the same, always different. If only these walls could speak! . . . of a life consumed by love, crucified with Jesus, raised up to God as the victim which every day is offered on the altar's sacred stone." In his last great discourse, Father Arrupe reveals that his love for Christ was translated into his devotion to the Heart of Jesus: "I could not pass over in silence my profound conviction that all of us, who are the Society of Jesus, should reflect and recognise before Christ crucified what this devotion has meant and what it should mean, especially today, for the Society. The world today presents us with challenges and opportunities which can be met only with the power of this love of the Heart of Christ. This is the message I wanted to give you. It is not a question of imposing anything, nor of giving orders in a matter which is concerned with love. . . The Society has need of the dynamic power expressed in this symbol and in the reality which it proclaims: the love of the Heart of Christ." Love of the Society, body for the Spirit; love of the Church, the Lord's Bride; love of Christ, Heart of God: this three-fold love, reflection of the Trinity's love, is the secret of Father Arrupe's life, whose works and deeds were always, and will ever be, a Magnificat. In thanksgiving we pray for Father Arrupe. Let us pray in words which he constantly repeated, the prayer of Saint Ignatius in his spiritual diary, spoken from the utmost depths of his weakness - "out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord": Eternal Father, be my strength; Eternal Son, be my strength; Eternal Holy Spirit, be my strength; Holy Trinity, be my strength; My God, one only God, be my strength!"