

**Homily of His Eminence Crescenzo Cardinal Sepe**  
Special Envoy of the Holy Father for “Asian Mission Congress”  
at the Closing Eucharistic Celebration  
(80<sup>th</sup> Mission Sunday)  
Chiang Mai (Thailand), October 22, 2006

**«For the Son of Man did not come to be served  
but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many» (Mk 10,45)**

Eminences, Excellencies, Reverend Fathers, the Religious and my dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

1. Let us give thanks to almighty God who under the action of the Holy Spirit reunited us here from all over Asia to “tell the story of Jesus”. We have proclaimed that Jesus is the Lord, the Saviour of man and of all mankind, in various modes and through diverse cultural and pastoral experiences. We are gathered here as inspired by the faith in Jesus Christ, to proclaim a new hope to the continent of Asia and to witness it through charity towards all. Servant of God Pope John Paul II exhorted in this regard in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*: “The Church in Asia is all the more eager for the task of proclamation knowing that ‘through the working of the Spirit, there already exists in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death.’”(n.20).

2. “Charity: Soul of the Mission” is the theme assigned by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the World Day of Mission this year, which is celebrated today as the mission Sunday all over the world. In the beginning of his Message for the occasion, the Holy Father points to the close relationship between mission and the charity: “Unless the mission is oriented by charity, that is, unless it springs from a profound act of divine love, it risks being reduced to mere philanthropic and social activity. In fact, God's love for every person constitutes the heart of the experience and proclamation of the Gospel, and those who welcome it in turn become its witnesses” (n.1).

3. Charity prompted the missionaries to dedicate their life for Christ. Martyrdom is the most eloquent proof of the truth of faith that can give a human face even to the most violent of death and to manifest its beauty amidst the most atrocious persecution. Through the ages, Asia has given the Church and to the world a great host of these heroes for the faith, and from the heart of Asia there raises the great song of praise: *Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus*, (The host of candid martyrs praise You!). This is the song of those who died for Christ in the Asian soil during the first centuries of the Church, and it is also the joyful cry of men and women of a more recent times like Saint Paul Miki and his companions, Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and his companions, Saint Andrew Dung Lac and his companions, Saint Andrew Kim Taegon and his companions. May the great host of Asian martyrs, old and new, never cease to teach the Church in Asia what it means to bear witness to the Lamb in whose blood “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”(cfr. *Rv* 7,14). May they stand as indomitable witnesses to the truth that Christians are called always and everywhere to proclaim nothing other than *the power of the Lord's Cross!* And may the blood of Asia's martyrs be now as always the seed of new life for the Church in every corner of the continent!

4. Charity remains the urge for each one of us to be missionaries: we are sent by Christ to narrate his story to all the nook and corners of Asia and the world at large. To be missionaries means to love God with one's whole self and to give, if necessary, one's own life for Him, as well. Love as *agape*, sacrifice or self-gift, hides the secret of the fruitfulness of the missionary action that goes beyond boundaries and cultures, to reach out to the people and to spread out as far as the farthest limits of the world. The language of the Love of the Crucified overcomes every misunderstanding, reaching to the heart of all followers. People who experience love as *agape*, the self-gift, move directly to the heart of God and of the Crucified. Beautiful and thought-provoking is the sentence by a Middle Eastern poet, Khalil Gibran: *When you love, you cannot say: "I have God in my heart"; but, rather: "I am in the heart of God"*.

5. At the conclusion of this First Asian Mission Congress, as we are united with the mother Church, we can also exclaim with St Paul: “Woe to me, if I do not proclaim the gospel!”. While entrusting our efforts at this mission congress to Mary, Mother of Missions, let us pray to our Lord:

**O Jesus, Son of Man, Who do not have a place to rest your head,  
Eternal Word of the Father, Living Hope,  
Our Heritage, fertile Land,  
Promised to Abraham, Benevolence of God:  
Blow over us, over the whole world,  
Life’s Spirit, Father’s Breath;  
and free your Church, the Holy people of God,  
from the signs of death and fear,  
from the logic of possession and stability.  
Leave us with uneasy.  
Break out our security.  
Make all of us courageous witnesses of the Gospel,  
disciples of Joy,  
prophets on the move,  
pilgrims without any stop,  
precarious foreigners, turned to your advent,  
free from every richness.  
You, our Homeland.  
You, our Heaven.  
You, our Beginning.  
You, our Way.  
You, our Principle.  
You, the Almighty, come.  
Maranathà. Halleluiah!**