

## Vatican by Augustinus

### Economic justice theme of Asia trip

*The Pope "costs more than the Queen," for good reason—and the rulers in the Kremlin are in a quandary.*

On Nov. 18, John Paul II undertook the longest of his pastoral trips, taking him to six countries: Bangladesh, Singapore, Fiji Islands, New Zealand, Australia, and Seychelles. In his first important engagement after the Oct. 27 peace encounter in Assisi, and consistent with the ecumenical purpose of that event, the Pope went to countries with non-Catholic majorities.

At Dacca, capital of Bangladesh, he stressed once again the injunction of Genesis and its consequences for economic policy: "Man's task on this Earth therefore, is to make his own life more human and to subdue the entire earth to this end. In this sense man is the master of all material reality" and "priest of the cosmos." For this "dignity not to be ruined by poverty, hunger, and disease, by the lack of dignified conditions of life and the chance of getting an education and finding a job, the conscience of the world must be put on alert to defend the image of God in man."

On Nov. 20 in Singapore, the city-state at the southern tip of the Malay peninsula, the Pope stressed: "Where there is not justice there cannot be peace. Peace is possible only where a just order guarantees everyone's rights. World peace is possible only when the international order is just."

In Australia, John Paul II spoke to cultural leaders on the mission of science: "By its very nature, science is theocentric in the last analysis and as such renders a great service to humanity.

"Science, together with the truth it brings in itself, does not abandon the persons who suffer from scorn for human life, and from violence. The great nobility of the human mind is based above all on the capacity to know God and to probe ever more deeply into the mystery of God's life and to discover man there, too."

He also went to the island south of Australia, Tasmania, which was settled by European convicts, and met with unemployed in the old capital city of Hobart. He told them: "The Church is confronting the problem of unemployment as a human problem, a problem which influences the life and dignity of man, a problem with a decisively ethical and moral character.

"Man's eternal destiny is tightly linked to all the elements that influence human freedom, human rights, and human progress. Work—or lack of work—is one of these elements, a very important element.

"Unemployment is the privation of all the values that work represents because it contributes to the support of individuals, families, and society.

"When one speaks of moral obligation of work, it is understood that everyone has the right to contribute in a real way to the great task of 'humanizing' the universe, that is, to make the world a more hospitable place and a better instrument of personal and social development."

In the plane returning to Rome, the Pope was questioned by journalists who asked if his trips did not cost too much. John Paul II replied: "I think

the expenses should not be counted, when we were paid for at an inestimable price" (referring to Christian redemption, at the cost of the Christ's crucifixion). When someone raised the trip by Queen Elizabeth II to Australia, which had cost much less, he said, "I cost more than the Queen, thank God. Yes, because the message I carry has its value, a transcendent value."

It has become usual for the Pope to use these exchanges with journalists during his travels to bypass the filter imposed by the Vatican Secretariat of State on information about the Holy See's policy. This is how the Pope's statements released on the plane to Bangladesh, about a possible trip to Moscow, should be read. John Paul clarified the issue with a simple reply: "I am not talking of a trip to Moscow; for me a trip to Lithuania would be in the line of my duty." He said this to respond to the journalists' insistence, who quoted the Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev. The Pope ruled out a spiritual voyage because there are no Catholics in Moscow, only Orthodox, and ruled out a political trip, thus sweeping aside the Secretariat of State's dreams of a papal mediation between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.

Two years ago, Moscow refused to let the Pope visit the Lithuanian Catholics for the Fifth Centenary of St. Casimir. Also, the Pope has a critical attitude toward the Yalta accords. It is not accidental that in the pontifical yearbook, Lithuania is listed as an autonomous state, together with the republics of Lettonia and Estonia.

Sources attribute the indefinite postponement of Soviet leader Gorbachov's trip to Italy, to Pope Wojtyla's statements. Faced with the Pope's explicit request to visit Lithuania or the Ukraine, not Moscow, the Kremlin leaders have not yet found an answer.