



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
TO NORWAY, ICELAND, FINLAND,
DENMARK AND SWEDEN

**HOLY MASS IN THE VICINITY OF THE ANCIENT
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF UPPSALA**

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Uppsala (Sweden)
Friday, 9 June 1989

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Dear Parents and Children,

[Text in Swedish]

1. Mini Kära barn, mina systrar och bröder!

Vi befinner oss idag på en av de platser där kristendomen tog sin, början i detta land, en plats som ansågs helig redan innan kristendomen kom till Sverige. Och det är på denna historiska mark som jag gläder mig att möta Sveriges katolska barn och deras föräldrar. Vi är alla Guds barn och i den andan kommer vi tillsammans att fira denna mässa.

Jag vänder mig också speciellt till representanterna för Svenska kyrkan och för frikyrkorna / och även till representanterna för kommunen, som har hjälpt till så att vi kan fira denna mässa i Gamla Uppsala.

Det är med extra stor glädje som jag välkomnar alla de många flyktingfamiljer som har kommit till denna mässa från olika flyktingläger i landet. Det finns i Sverige många människor som varit

tvungna att lämna sina hemländer för att finna ett nytt hem här. För dem av er som nyligen tvingats lämna era länder för att i Sverige finna ett nytt hem för er själva och era barn känns mahända smärtan särskilt stor. Lat oss tillsammans be att Gud skänker er sin frid i det land som välkomnat er.

2. As we come together to celebrate the mystery of Christ present in word and sacrament, let us reflect on *the promise* which is referred to in the First Reading of today's Mass where we read that "the promise is to you and to your children" (*Act. 2, 39*). What is this promise?

It is *the message of salvation for all people*. It was preached by Christ and is still being preached by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. Before he ascended into heaven, Christ had assured his apostles that he would not abandon them. He promised them the gift of the Spirit, and he kept this promise! On the day of Pentecost, when the apostles had come together, "there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (*Ibid. 2, 3-4*).

My dear friends: *the promise of salvation, handed on by the apostles, is truly meant for you and your children*. You too have received the gift of the Holy Spirit as a pledge of salvation in Christ. But this gift also brings a responsibility. You are called to make promises and to keep them: the promises of your Baptism, especially as they are lived in lifelong commitments to God in marriage, the priesthood, and the religious life. Today I wish to speak to you on the *vocation of marriage* in particular, on *parenthood and the mission of the family according to the plan of salvation*.

3. As boys and girls grow into young adulthood, they are attracted to one another. They begin to share their experiences of life, their family backgrounds, their interests and their hopes for the future. Little by little a relationship of love develops and deepens, until it reaches a stage when it must be lived in the union of marriage.

In marriage, a man and a woman *pledge themselves to each other in an unbreakable covenant* of total mutual self-giving, and they promise to remain faithful to one another to the end, in spite of whatever difficulties may come. In this *sacramental bond*, a man and a woman form a union of love, a love that is not a passing emotion or infatuation, but a responsible and free decision to unite themselves completely "in good times and in bad". It is a love to be proclaimed before the world – Good News to be shared. The marriage contract is an unconditional and enduring covenant. The love which is pledged before the altar and which is blessed in the Rite of Marriage has a stability which is not subject to change. *Christian marriage is a sacrament* established as such by Christ. It has the *elements of the mystery of Christ's love* for his Church, the Bride of Christ (Cfr. *Eph. 5, 32*). The word "love" has a sacred meaning and in the context of Christian marriage should be used with special reverence and respect.

Love of this kind and the commitment to lifelong fidelity call for *careful preparation from early*

childhood to wedding day. And after the wedding day, after the exchange of vows, love continues to grow and deepen; it does not diminish with the passing years. True love lasts and will not be overturned by the storms of change. *The grace of God helps sustain* the sacramental bonds and strengthens *the couple* to meet the challenges of life.

4. In God's plan the love of husband and wife points beyond itself; *new life* is generated, a family is born. A family is *a community of love and of life.* Children express in a concrete way the love pledged at the altar. A "family" and a "home": these are beautiful words, which evoke a sense of security and intimacy. They are words with a deep meaning which must be cherished and protected.

Being a parent brings worries and difficulties, as well as joy and fulfilment. *I would remind you who are parents: your children are your great treasure.* They love you very much, even if they find it hard at times to express that love. It is a sad reality that due to the pressures of work and the quickening pace of life, many parents find it increasingly difficult to give enough time to their children. I urge you today: *find opportunities for talking and sharing at a deep level with your children.* Do not let them become strangers living under the same roof. The years spent in the home pass so quickly. They are precious years. Every moment spent with your children will enrich them, and you in turn will find your own lives immeasurably enriched. The future of the Church, the future of humanity itself, depends in great part on the quality of family life and the closeness of family ties nurtured in the home. *The greatness of this nation, and any nation, can be measured by the greatness of its families.*

5. I also wish to say some words to a special group present here: to the children.

[Text in Swedish]

Kära barn!

Inte kunde väl paven komma hit ände från Rom utan att tala om för er hur ofta han tänker på er och på alla andra barn i Sverige. När jag är ute och reser i olika delar av världen så blir jag särskilt glad när jag får möta barnen. *Var och en av er är Guds gava* till era föräldrar. Men ert liv är på samma gång en gava från Gud. Ni är också en gava för ert land och det är ni som är dess framtid. Ni är även en gava och en tillgång för Kyrkan, både i er församling, i skolan och i era andra sällsättningar.

Jag vet att ni förstår att *ni har fått så mycket.* Det har finte alla andra barn fått. Inte alla barn är lyckliga. Inte alla är friska, välnärda och välskötta. Jag hoppas att ni växer upp med en stark längtan att kunna få göra något för dem som är mindre lyckligt lottade än ni och att ni försöker skapa en värld där det finns en varm hand för alla som behöver hjälp. Det vill Jesus att ni skall göra.

Och ni skall alltid, även när ni är ledsna, komma ihåg att Jesus är er vän. Han bad att barnen skulle komma till honom och han visade all omsorg för dem. Eftersom han är er vän vill han att ni skall tala med honom i bön. Tänker ni på att be för era föräldrar, era syskon och far och morföräldrar?

Tackar ni honom för all hans gavor? Vill ni be för mig också?

Tack för det, och ni kan vara säkra på att ni alltid har en plats i mitt hjärta och mina böner.

A todos los hispano-hablantes, todos los españoles, todos los latino-americanos, especialmente los chilenos aquí presentes, mis mejores deseos para ustedes, para vuestras familias. Que Dios bendiga las familias, los padres, como también los niños en todas las familias.

A teraz pragnę to samo życzenie powtórzyć wszystkim przybyszom z Polski, zarówno tym, którzy tu już zapuścili korzenie od dawna, jak i świeżo przybyłym. Drodzy bracia i siostry, starajcie się ze wszystkich sił zachować, utrzymać tę najświętszą, sakramentalną więź małżeństwa i rodziny – dla was samych, dla was, mężów i żon, dla was, ojców i matek, dla waszych dzieci, dla waszych wnuków, dla przyszłości narodu, także i tego szwedzkiego narodu i Kościoła. Tego wam z całego serca życzę i o to się wraz z wami i wszystkimi tu zgromadzonymi dzisiaj modłę, a Msza św. jest za rodziny. Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus.

6. Dear friends in Christ: *As Christian families, parents and children together, you are sent out to bear prophetic witness, to discover with others the presence of the Holy Spirit in your lives.* Your joy in receiving the Good News is great but it can be made greater by sharing it with others. Swedish Saints like Saint Birgitta and Saint Eric realized this: the Good News is meant to be shared. They took to heart this command of our Lord, and today I ask all Swedish families to do the same.

With Christ, I say first of all – “Go”! Go into the world with confidence in God’s love. For some people the world can be an empty place because they are *afraid to believe* in the light, love and goodness which flow from God’s grace. Go to those who are confused or who have lost their way in life, to those in despair, to those whose hearts are so filled with life’s cares or material things that there is little or no room left for God.

With Christ I also say to you: *“Make disciples”*. It is our privilege to point out Christ to those who are searching for him and to invite them *to follow* him. We should not be afraid to answer those who ask basic questions about our faith and to proclaim the Gospel by word and deed. Do not be afraid to make disciples of those who are completely indifferent to Christ and his message.

“Baptize”. Jesus has called us to membership in the Church, and he wishes us in turn to lead others to the Church. He wants all people *to immerse* themselves in his love, *to purify* themselves

of their sins, *to wash and become clean*. He wants all *to be converted and to live*.

“Teach”, said Jesus. *Teach one another the love that God has for each one of you*. Teach by faith and example. Parents: teach your children the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus, our loving Saviour and Friend. Teach them the importance of prayer. Teach them how to pray. You are the first teachers of your children in the ways of faith and holiness. Nobody can take your place in this work.

Go make disciples, baptize and teach! This can be the basis of a vigorous family apostolate in Sweden.

7. On the day of Pentecost, the people were so struck with Peter’s words that they asked the apostles: “Brethren what shall we do?” (Act. 2, 37). You can ask yourselves the same question. *What shall you do?* You have received the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. His gifts are not meant to be hidden but to be used to further God’s Kingdom on earth. What shall you do? You have the freedom to decide. The world is waiting for your response. This can be the moment of your decision!

“The promise is for you and your children”.

The Lord has been faithful to his promises. You must be faithful to him. Go forward together in faith, hope and love, alive in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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