



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE PHILIPPINES,
PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AUSTRALIA AND SRI LANKA

10th WORLD YOUTH DAY

**HOLY MASS FOR THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM**

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

*Chapel of the University of Santo Tomás, Manila
Friday, 13 January 1995*

"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mc 10,17).

Dear Friends in Christ,

1. A young man once asked Jesus this question. In reply, Jesus reminded him of God's commandments. And when the young man indicated that he had kept all the commandments from his earliest days, *Jesus looked at him with love and said: "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me"* (Mc 10,21).

"Come, follow me!". The call which the Lord addressed that day to the young man in the Gospel echoes in our time. The Church repeats this call when the Pope, the Bishops, and those involved in the pastoral care of young people invite them to gather together. There are many such occasions for young people to meet: in their parishes and Dioceses, and for the past ten years at the World Youth Days; in Rome, then in Buenos Aires in Argentina, later in Santiago de Compostela in Spain, later in Jasna Góra, Częstochowa in Poland, and in Denver in the United States. Today we are here in Manila, in the Philippines, in Far East, in Asia. Even though there are delegations here from most of the world's countries, we have to say that this is, in a special way, the World Youth Day of the Churches of Asia and the Far East.

2. The Fifth *International Youth Forum*, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, under the

presidency of Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, has brought together the delegates of the Bishops' Conferences, and of international Movements, Associations and Ecclesial Groups, to share their experiences in the apostolate in different parts of the world, and to reflect on the theme of the World Youth Day.

The theme this year is expressed in the words of Christ to the Apostles after the Resurrection: "*As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you*" (*Io 20,21*). Two thousand years ago these words *set in motion the Church's never-ending mission to proclaim the Gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth*. The Lord Jesus said to the Apostles: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (*Io 20,22*), and the mission – in obedience to these words – began on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and those simple men became the holders of the divine power which enabled them to announce the Gospel with courage, even to the shedding of their blood.

3. *What do these words mean today?* What do they mean for you, young people of the International Youth Forum?

When Jesus says: "*As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you*", his words have the same meaning now as they did immediately after the Resurrection. At the same time they *always have a new meaning*. The task of the World Youth Day, and especially the task of the Forum, is to disclose this meaning, which is both eternal and contemporary. In a way, *your task is to invite the Holy Spirit to this Filipino cenacle*, where Jesus' words can become once again *a mission, a sending of apostles*.

4. It is always Christ who sends. *But whom does he send?* You, young people, are the ones he looks upon with love. Christ, who says: "Follow me", wants you to live your lives with a sense of vocation. He wants your lives to have a precise meaning, a dignity. Most of you are called to marriage and family life; but some will receive a call to the priesthood or religious life.

In fact there is a representative group of *Seminarians, Novices and young Religious* present at this Mass. I greet each one of you and encourage you to be steadfast in answering the call to a total self-giving love of the Lord. He will make many demands on you. He will require the fullest commitment of your whole being to the spreading of the Gospel and to the service of his people. *But do not be afraid!* His demands are also the measure of his love for each of you personally.

5. What is it that Christ wants young people to do? The Second Vatican Council has made us more aware that there are many ways of building up the Church. Every form of the apostolate is valid and fruitful if it exists in the Church, by the Church and for the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, spoken of in the teaching of Saint Paul.

The World Youth Day can be for all of you an occasion for discovering your calling, for discerning the particular path which Christ sets before you. The search and discovery of God's will for you is a deep and fascinating endeavor. It requires of you the attitude of trust expressed in the words of the Psalm used in today's liturgy: "You will show me the path to life, fullness of joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever" (*Ps 15,11*). Every vocation, every path to which Christ calls us, ultimately leads to fulfilment and happiness, because it leads to God, to sharing in God's own life.

And I see that the people of the Philippines are very joyous. Why are they so joyous? I am convinced that you Filipino peoples are so joyous because you received the Good News. Who is receiving the Good News is joyous, is radiant with joy, and also is giving the joy to others. Today they are giving that joy to the Pope. They are giving the same joy to the Cardinals, to the Bishops, to priests, to all of you! And I myself, and all of us are so grateful to the Filipino peoples for their joyous hospitality.

6. Returning to the text, do not be slow to answer the Lord's call! From the passage of the Book of Exodus read to us in this Mass we can learn how the Lord acts in every vocation (cf. *Ex* 3,1-6; 9-12). First, he provokes a new awareness of his presence – the burning bush. When we begin to show an interest *he calls us by name*. When our answer becomes more specific and like Moses we say: "Here I am" (cf. *Ex* 3,4), then he reveals more clearly both himself and his compassionate love for his people in need. Gradually he leads us to discover the practical way in which we should serve him: "*I will send you*". And usually it is then that fears and doubts come to disturb us and make it more difficult to decide. It is then that we need to hear the Lord's assurance: "*I am with you*". Every vocation is a deep personal experience of the truth of these words: "*I am with you*" (*Ex* 3,12). I give to the words my personal convictions. It was so important for me to hear them. "I am with you. Be not afraid!"

So we see that every vocation to the apostolate springs from familiarity with God's word and involves being sent to communicate that word to others. These "others" can be people who already know the language of the revealed word. But they can also be people who do not yet know that language, as happens in the case of the missionary vocation. The word of God is unknown to some because they have *not yet heard it*. Others have *forgotten it*, or have *abandoned* what they once heard. No matter what the difficulties, the apostle knows that he is not alone: "*I am always with you*". I pray every day that the Catholic young people of the world will hear the call of Christ and that their response will be what the Responsorial Psalm says: The Lord is "my allotted portion... I set the Lord ever before me; *with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed*" (*Ps* 15,8).

7. *Enormous tasks* lie before the youth of the world; especially before the Catholic youth of the Philippines, of Asia and the Far East, on the eve of the Third Millennium. *The largest mission land of the world* is in need of workers, and the Church constantly prays the Lord of the harvest to send them, to send us, to send you.

As I go to the altar, I wish, together with the Bishops and priests gathered here, to offer up under the forms of bread and wine all that you, young men and women, carry in your hearts. The bread and wine will become, in the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ. When you receive him in Holy Communion, may you have the courage to listen to his call. Let me express this call in the words of a song (but no singing) which I learned from young people when I was still in my own country. Their song goes: "*Come with me to save the world; for already it is the twentieth century!*". Indeed, the twentieth century is now coming to an end. So Christ says: "*Come with me into the Third Millennium, to save the world!*".

I am very anxious to meet you personally after the celebration, and to be near to everyone of you,

from so different languages and countries and nations of the whole world. I am anxious to see you, to come and meet you leaning on this walking-stick.

"As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you..." Amen.