



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE PARISH OF "SAN NICOLA DI BARI" IN ROME

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 7 June 1998

1. *"Come let us worship the one true God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"* (Invitatory, Italian breviary). The Liturgy of Hours today begins with these words. They are echoed by those of the Entrance Antiphon of today's Holy Mass: *"Blessed be God the Father and his Only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit: for he has shown that he loves us"* (Entrance Antiphon).

These words are a hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity, the great mystery that we celebrate this Sunday.

In fact, all liturgy is a song of praise to the Trinitarian mystery; every prayer is addressed to God the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The most simple invocation, such as the "Sign of the Cross", is made "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"; and the most solemn liturgical orations end with praise to the Trinity. Every time we raise our minds and our hearts to God, we enter into the Holy Trinity's eternal dialogue of love.

"Praise to the Holy Trinity and undivided Unity. Let us praise God for he has shown us his mercy" (Second Antiphon, First Vespers).

2. *"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit"* (Rom 5:5).

When we approach the mystery of the Holy Trinity, we are clearly aware that we find ourselves before the first of those "mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known" (First Vatican Council, DS 3015).

The entire development of divine revelation is directed to the manifestation of God-Love, of God-Communion. This concerns, first of all, the Trinitarian life considered in itself, in the perfect communion that for all eternity unites the three divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. By revealing his love to man, God calls men to share his own life and to enter into communion with him.

To the universal vocation of believers to holiness, each of the three divine Persons makes his own specific contribution: the Father is the source of all holiness, the Son is the mediator of all salvation and the Holy Spirit is the One who animates and sustains the journey of man towards full and definitive communion with God.

In the Office of Readings today we read a significant text from St Athanasius: "Just as grace is given from the Father through the Son, so there could be no communication of the gift to us except in the Holy Spirit. But when we share in the Spirit, we possess the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Spirit himself" (Second Reading).

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters of St Nicholas of Bari Parish! I thank the Lord for giving me the opportunity today to celebrate this liturgical feast with your community. My most cordial greeting to you all! First of all to the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishop for the Southern Pastoral Sector of the Diocese, Bishop Clemente Riva, to your zealous parish priest, Fr Lorenzo Meati, together with the parochial vicar, both belonging to the spiritual family of the Oblate Sons of Our Lady of Divine Love.

I also greet the priests and women religious who give their generous service to the organizations active in the parish territory, especially to those involved with the Grassi Hospital, the Paraplegic Centre of Ostia and the Italian military barracks.

My greeting is extended to the people of the neighbourhood, with a fraternal thought for the sick and elderly who are unable to join us for the Eucharistic celebration. I wish to be spiritually united with all the inhabitants of Ostia, assuring every individual and every family of my closeness in prayer. I gladly add a thought for the Polish community, which for a long time has been meeting every Sunday in your parish.

4. Yours is a large parish community, which grows even more during the summer season with the arrival of the holiday-makers. Unfortunately, though, the location of the church does not make it as easy as one would hope for the faithful to participate in sacramental life and Christian formation.

Dear brothers and sisters, these current difficulties must not restrain your apostolic action; instead they must act as a further stimulus to increase your efforts to make the community even more alive and missionary.

In view of the third millennium, witness to your faith with courage and consistency, and be directly involved in the work of the new evangelization. Generously continue the programmes of the City Mission, undertaking evangelization activities directed to those who, having a house on the shore, come to spend a few months there, especially during the summer.

Along with this missionary fervour there must be an effort to form young people and to give spiritual guidance to families, the primary cells of the ecclesial community.

As I encourage you to continue in this task, I would particularly like to greet the children who attend catechism classes, as well as the boys and girls, some of whom belong to the Scout group. I extend my greeting to the engaged couples preparing for marriage and to all the young people. As regards young people, how can we fail even now to turn our hearts and minds to the World Youth Day scheduled in Rome for 19-20 August of the Year 2000? The whole diocesan

community will have to mobilize itself for that important event, to welcome the many young people who will come from every part of the world for such an extraordinary experience of faith.

It is everyone's responsibility to prepare for the Great Jubilee, because it "certainly involves a special grace of the Lord for the Church and for the whole of humanity" (cf. Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 55).

On this day dedicated to the Holy Trinity, how can we fail to stress that the Holy Year will have as its aim "to give glory to the Trinity, from whom everything in the world and in history comes and to whom everything returns" (ibid.)?

The feast of "Corpus Christi", with its Eucharistic celebration next Thursday at St John Lateran followed by the now traditional procession, in which I invite everyone to participate, reminds us of the International Eucharistic Congress. This extraordinary spiritual gathering will take place at the same Basilica of St John Lateran precisely on the feast of the Trinity in the Year 2000, to remind everyone that Christ is the only way to approach the Father and that he is present and alive in the Church and in the world.

5. *"Glory and honour to God in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; glory and praise to him for endless ages"* (Third Antiphon, First Vespers).

Yes, glory and honour to the Holy Trinity. Let us together raise our song of praise and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity.

Let us adore the mystery of the hidden presence of God among us, contemplating in silence his saving plan.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Let us make our own the words suggested to us by the liturgy: *"Glory and praise to God who is, who was and who is to come"*.

Amen!

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