



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II

FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE MARIAN YEAR

IN LA VANG, VIỆT NAM

To Archbishop Étienne Nguyễn Nhu Thê of Huế, Việt Nam¹. On the occasion of the closure of the Marian Year and the 25th three-yearly pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang, I join through prayer the Vietnamese faithful and pilgrims who have entrusted themselves to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary, asking this most holy Mother to guide the Catholic Church in Việt Nam on her journey to the Lord, and to help her in the witness she must bear on the threshold of the third millennium. "For 2,000 years, the Church has been the cradle in which Mary places Jesus and entrusts him to the adoration and contemplation of all peoples" (Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, *Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 11), who never tire of calling upon the Mother of all mercy. People always find shelter and courage under her protection. In fact, Mary "shines forth on earth ... a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 68) in the midst of the difficulties of this world. She is the mother of the pilgrim Church to which she continues to give birth, constantly inviting people to accept God's promise as she did and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to be Gospel missionaries.² By enrolling in her school, especially on the threshold of the Great Jubilee, when they will be called to an ever deeper conversion, the faithful will assert their faith, be more attentive to the Word of God and will be available for their brothers and sisters. For all Christ's disciples, Mary is the model *par excellence* of Christian life. She prepares our hearts to receive Christ, instructing us, just as she did the servants at the wedding at Cana, to do whatever he tells us (cf. Jn 2:5). She invites us to reach out to those who need our help, as she herself did with her cousin Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39-45). Thus from our beloved Mother we receive a "taste" of the encounter with God and the mission among our brethren, which are the two aspects of Christian love. When we turn to Mary our hope is revived. Indeed, she is a part of our humanity, and in her we contemplate the glory God promises to those who respond to his call. I therefore invite the faithful to put their trust in our common Mother, often invoked under the title *Star of the Sea*, so that, amid the storms of sin and the sometimes painful events of history, they will remain firmly anchored to Christ and bear witness to his love. "Following her, you will never lose your way; imploring her, you will never know despair; thinking of her, you will avoid all errors. With her support, you will not fall; with her protection, you will have nothing to fear; under her guidance, you will never be tired; thanks to her favour, you will reach the goal" (St Bernard, *Second Homily on the Gospel passage: "The Angel Gabriel was sent"*).³ In going to the Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang, so dear to the hearts of the Vietnamese faithful, pilgrims entrust to her their joys and their sorrows, their hopes and their sufferings. In this way they turn to God and make themselves intercessors for their families and for their entire people asking the Lord to instil sentiments of peace, brotherhood and solidarity in the hearts of all men and women, so that all the Vietnamese will be every day more closely united, in order to build a world in which it is pleasant to live, based on the essential spiritual and moral values and where each person can be recognized in his dignity as a child of God, and turn freely and with filial love to his Father in heaven who is "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4).⁴ I am particularly

close to you in my thoughts at this time when the Church in your country is honouring the Mother of the Saviour; I entrust you to the intercession of Our Lady of La Vang and cordially impart to you and all your pastors an affectionate Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to the pilgrims who will visit the shrine in the spirit of the Jubilee and to all the Catholic faithful in Việt Nam. *From the Vatican, 16 July 1999.* © Copyright 1999 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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