



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER
FOR THE SYMPOSIUM HELD BY THE CONGREGATION
FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH ON "VERITATIS SPLENDOR"**

To my Venerable Brother Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

*Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*¹. I learned with pleasure that your Congregation will be holding a Symposium on "*The anthropology of moral theology according to the Encyclical "Veritatis Splendor"*". Ten years since its publication, the doctrinal value of the Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* is more timely than ever. Resplendent is the destiny of those who - called to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, "the true light that enlightens every man" (Jn 1: 9) - welcome and live the truth that Jesus communicates or, more precisely, the truth that he is, and so become "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (cf. Mt 5: 13, 14). The mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, "centre of the universe and of history" (Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 1), forms the true horizon of man's being and acting. Not only does Jesus Christ give a wise answer to humanity's religious and moral questions, but he offers himself as the decisive response, because in his mystery of "Word made flesh", the mystery of the human person truly becomes clear (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22). Like the young man in the Gospel (cf. Mt 19: 16), the man of the third millennium also turns to Jesus, the Good Teacher, to obtain from him the light of truth concerning what is good and evil.² To start afresh from Christ, contemplate his face, follow him with perseverance: these are the teachings that *Veritatis Splendor* continues to propose to us. Beyond transitory cultural changes, there are essential realities that do not change, but rather find their utmost foundation in Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and for ever. "Christ is the 'Beginning' who, having taken on human nature, definitively illumines it in its constitutive elements and in its dynamism of charity towards God and neighbour" (n. 53). The main reference to Christian morality, therefore, is not the culture of man, but the project of God in creation and in redemption. In the paschal mystery and in the mystery of our adoption as children, the dignity of humanity's origin emerges.³ Certainly, today, the formation of the faithful's mature conscience according to the truth is becoming increasingly difficult for the Pastors of the Church, scholars and teachers of Christian morality, in an atmosphere of widespread relativism in regard to the moral law, hostile to the saving truth. I therefore exhort all of the Symposium participants to deepen the essential bond that exists between truth, goodness and freedom. Such a relation, other than in the nature of the human being, has its ontological foundation in the Incarnation and finds itself renewed and revealed in the historic-salvific event of the cross of our Redeemer. The vital secret of the Church exists in keeping her gaze fixed on the Crucified One and in proclaiming his redeeming sacrifice: "Contemplation of Jesus Crucified is thus the highroad which the Church must tread every day if she wishes to understand the full meaning of freedom: the gift of self in service to God and one's brethren. Communion with the Crucified and Risen Lord is the never-ending source from

which the Church draws unceasingly in order to live in freedom, to give of herself and to serve" (*ibid.*, n. 87). The truth of Christian morality, sealed by the cross of Jesus, has become the new law of the People of God in the Holy Spirit. The answer it gives to modern man's request for happiness has the power and wisdom of Christ crucified, Truth which is given out of love.⁴ To all of you attending this important Symposium, I wish to express, in conclusion, my thanks and best wishes. My thanks is intended especially for you, for your consistent loyal collaboration with the Magisterium of the Church through your commitment to researching and deepening Catholic doctrine in the field of morality. Such obedience to truth is the preferred way for its comprehension and application. My wish is that the work achieved in this Symposium, your probings and wise intuitions, may serve to enlighten the Pastors and all the faithful more and more so as to keep alive in the Church that *communio caritatis* that is founded on the *communio veritatis*. My Blessing to all! From Castel Gandolfo, 24 September 2003 **JOHN PAUL II**

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