



# The Holy See

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**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE YOUTH OF THE WORLD ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE III WORLD YOUTH DAY 1988**

*"Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5) Dear Young People!*<sup>1</sup> This year again I am writing to you to announce the next World Day of Youth, which will be celebrated in the local Churches on Palm Sunday 1988. This time, however, the Day will have a very special character, because we are experiencing, in the Church, the Marian Year, which I opened on the Solemnity of Pentecost and which I will close on the 15 August next, Solemnity of the Assumption. At the end of the second millennium of the Christian era, at a critical moment in the history of a world labouring under so many difficult problems, the Marian Year is for all of us a special gift. During this year Mary appears to our eyes under a new light: a Mother full of tender and sensitive love, a Teacher who goes before us along the way of faith and points out for us the path of life. The Marian Year is therefore a year in which to listen to Mary in a special way. And this must also be the special character of the forthcoming World Day of Youth. It is Mary, this time, who is calling you together, young people! It is She who is fixing the rendez-vous, because She has much to say to you! I am sure that – as in previous years – you will not fail to take an active part, under the guidance of your Pastors, in the celebration of the Youth Day.<sup>2</sup> The World Day of Youth 1988 will thus have as its centre Mary, Virgin and Mother of God, and it will be a day for listening. What will Mary, our Mother and Teacher, say to us? In the Gospel there is a sentence in which Mary shows herself to be truly our Teacher. It is a sentence spoken by her during the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. After saying to her Son: "They have no more wine", She says to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). These are the very words that I have chosen as the guideline for the World Day 1988. They contain a very important message that is valid for all men and women in all ages. "Do whatever he tells you ..." means: listen to Jesus my Son, follow his Word and place your trust in Him. Learn to say "yes" to the Lord in every circumstance of your life. It is a very encouraging message, of which we all feel the need. "Do whatever he tells you ...". In these words Mary expressed, above all, the deepest secret of her own life. She is wholly present in these words. Her life has indeed been one great "yes" to the Lord. A "yes" full of joy and trust. Mary full of grace, the Immaculate Virgin, lived her whole life in complete openness to God, in perfect harmony with his will – even in the most difficult moments, which reached their culminating point on the summit of Mount Calvary, at the foot of the Cross. She never withdraws her "yes", because she has placed

her whole life in the hands of God: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (*Lk* 1:38). In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* I wrote in this regard: "Indeed, at the Annunciation Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the 'full submission of intellect and will', manifesting 'the obedience of faith' to him who spoke to her through his messenger. She responded, therefore, with all her human and feminine 'I', and this response of faith included both perfect cooperation with 'the grace of God that precedes and assists' and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit" (N. 13). "Do whatever he tells you ..." This short sentence contains the whole life programme that Mary the Teacher carried out as the first disciple of the Lord and that she spells out for us today. It is a life project based on the solid and sure foundation called Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> The world in which we are living is shaken by crises of various kinds, among which one of the most dangerous is the loss of the meaning of life. Many of our contemporaries have lost the true meaning of life and they are looking for substitutes in reckless spending, in drugs, in alcohol and eroticism. They are looking for happiness, but the result is deep sadness, an empty heart and, not infrequently, despair. In this situation many young people are asking themselves fundamental questions: How am I to live my life so as not to lose it? On what basis must I build my life to make it truly a life of happiness? What must I do to give meaning to my life? How must I behave in life situations that are often complex and difficult – in the family, the school, the university, at work, in the circle of my friends? ... These are questions, and at times very dramatic questions, that many of you young people are certainly asking yourselves today. I am sure that you all want to build your life on a solid foundation which will enable you to stand up to the trials that will never be lacking – a rock foundation. And you see before you Mary, the Virgin of Nazareth, the humble handmaid of the Lord, who points to her Son, saying: "Do whatever he tells you", that is, listen to Jesus, obey Jesus, his commandments, place your trust in Him. This is the only project for a truly successful and happy life. This is also the one source that gives the deepest meaning to life. Last year, during the World Day of Youth, you meditated on the words of St John: "We have known and put our faith in God's love for us" (*1Jn* 4:16). This year Mary explains to you, young people, what it means to believe and to love God. Faith and love are not just words or vague feelings. Believing and loving God means a consistent life, lived wholly in the light of the Gospel; it means being committed to doing always what Jesus tells us both through Holy Scripture and in the teaching of the Church. Yes, this is not easy, it often calls for great courage in going against the trends of fashion and of the opinions of our world. But this – I repeat – is the one project for a truly successful and happy life. This is what Mary teaches us at the wedding feast of Cana; it is a teaching that we want to receive in depth during the World Day of Youth 1988. Dear young people! I invite you all to take part in this most important event. Come and listen to the Mother of Jesus, your Mother and Teacher!<sup>4</sup> Every World Day of Youth, if it is not to become a mere external and superficial celebration, calls for an itinerary of preparation in the pastoral activity of the diocese and the parish, in the life of the groups, movements and associations of young people. This concerns above all the Lenten period. I invite you all to set out along this path of spiritual preparation, in order to receive more fully the grace of the Marian Year and the gift of the World Day 1988. Meditate on Mary's life. Especially you, the girls, the young women! For you the Immaculate Virgin is a sublime model of a woman aware of her personal

dignity and of her lofty vocation. Meditate on it, you too boys and young men! Listening to the words spoken by Mary at Cana in Galilee: "Do whatever he tells you", try, all of you, to build your lives – from the beginning – on the solid foundation that is Jesus. May your meditation on the mystery of Mary find its outlet in imitation of her life. Learn from her to listen and to follow the Word of God (cf. *Jn* 2:5). Learn from her to stay close to the Lord even if, at times, this may cost you a great deal (cf. *Jn* 19:25). May your meditation on the mystery of Mary find its outlet also in trustful prayer to Mary. Try to discover the beauty of the Rosary, so that it may be your faithful companion through your life. I close this brief message with a warm greeting to all the young people of the world. Know that the Pope is close to each one of you through his prayer. May my Apostolic Blessing accompany you in the itinerary of spiritual preparation and in the actual celebration, in your diocese, of the World Day of Youth 1988. *From the Vatican, 13 December 1987, third Sunday of Advent.* IOANNES PAULUS PP. II