



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO YOUTH OF THE WORLD
ON THE OCCASION OF THE II WORLD YOUTH DAY 1987**

*"We ourselves have known and put our faith
in God's love towards ourselves" (1Jn 4:16)*

Dear young people, my friends, 1. On 8th June this year I had the immense joy of announcing that the next World Day of Youth will be celebrated at Buenos Aires on Palm Sunday 1987. This will be the moment in which, with the help of God, I shall culminate my apostolic visit to the countries of the cone of South America: Uruguay, Chile and Argentina. At Buenos Aires I shall have the great joy of meeting not only the young people of Argentina, but also many other young people coming from the whole of the Latin-American continent and other countries in the world. In this much-awaited meeting, we shall all feel in communion of prayer, friendship and brotherhood, responsibility and commitment, with the other young people who, gathered round their Pastors, will celebrate this Day in local Churches throughout the world. We shall also feel in union with all those who are seeking God with a sincere heart and who wish to dedicate their youthful energies to the construction of a juster and more fraternal society. It is significant that the World Day of Youth should this time have the centre of its celebration in Latin-America, the majority of whose population consists of young people, who are the animators and future protagonists of what has been called the "continent of hope". The Church of Latin-America, which proclaimed its "preferential option for the young" at Puebla (Mexico), is preparing itself for a "new evangelization" to rediscover its roots and rejuvenate the Christian tradition and culture of its peoples on the threshold of the "half millennium" of its first evangelization. Yet if our attention is fixed on it, it is also extended to the four corners of the earth, and our words are intended as an appeal to young people everywhere, from the North and the South, from the East and the West, to join together, for it is they who will be the men and women of the year 2000 and whom the Church recognises and welcomes with hope.

2. The theme of this World Day places before our eyes the witness of the apostle St John, when he exclaims: "We ourselves have known and put our faith in God's love towards ourselves" (1Jo 4:16).

In this regard, I would like to remind you of a thought I expressed in my first Encyclical: "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it" (*Redemptor hominis*, 10). And how much

more this reality holds good for the life of the young, during this phase of special responsibility and hope, development of the person, definition of the meaning and the great ideals and projects of life, and aspiration to truth and to the attainment of genuine happiness! It is in this period of our life that we most have a need to feel ourselves recognized, supported, listened to and loved. You know very well, in the depths of your heart, that the satisfactions afforded by a superficial hedonism are ephemeral and leave nothing but emptiness in our soul; that it is illusory to enclose ourselves in the shell of our own egoism; that all indifference and scepticism contradict the noble aspirations of a love that knows no frontiers; and that the temptations of violence and of ideologies which deny God can only lead to a dead end. Since man can neither live nor understand himself without love, I want to appeal to you to grow in humanity, to give absolute priority to the values of the spirit, and to transform yourselves into "new men" by increasingly recognising and accepting the presence of God in your life: the presence of a God who is Love; of a Father who loves each one of us for the whole of eternity, who created us by love and who loved us so much that he gave up his Only Son to forgive us our sins, to reconcile us to Him, and to enable us to live with Him in a communion of love which will never end. The World Day of Youth should therefore prepare us all to accept this gift of the love of God by which we are transformed and by which we are saved. The world anxiously awaits our witness of love, a witness born from a deep personal conviction and a sincere act of love and faith in the Risen Christ. This is what is meant by experiencing love and believing in it.³ Our celebrations will also have a clearly community dimension. This is an inescapable need of the love of God and the communion of those who feel themselves to be sons of the same Father, brothers in Jesus Christ and united by the power of the Spirit. By forming part of the great family of the redeemed and by being living members of the Church, you will experience, during this World Day, the enthusiasm and joy of the love of God by which you are called to unity and solidarity. This is a call that excludes no one. On the contrary, it is one that transcends frontiers and is addressed to all young people without distinction. It is a call that strengthens and renews the bonds by which young people are united. In these conditions, it is essential that the bonds that unite them be particularly strong and operative with the young who are suffering from unemployment, who are living in poverty or solitude, who feel themselves marginalised or who bear the heavy cross of sickness. It is essential, too, that this message of friendship also reach those who do not accept religious faith. Charity does not compromise with error, but it goes out towards everyone to open up the paths to conversion. How splendid and luminous are the words addressed to us in this respect by St Paul in his hymn to charity! (Cf. *1Cor* 13). May they be for you a programme of conduct and resolute commitment for your present and future life! The love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Rom* 5:5) must deepen our awareness of the blatant threats posed by hunger and war, the scandalous disparities between opulent minorities and poor peoples, the violations of human rights and fundamental human liberties, including man's right to religious freedom, and actual or potential manipulations of his dignity. I deeply and strongly felt the presence and prayer of young people on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for Peace held at Assisi on 27 October, in which the representatives of the various Christian confessions and religions of the world participated. More than ever, it is vitally important that the enormous scientific and technological advances of our time be directed, with moral wisdom, at the well-being of the whole of man and all men. The gravity, urgency and complexity of current problems and challenges demand of the new generations the necessary capacity and competence in the various fields, but the integral well-being of man, created in the image of God and called to an eternal destiny, must be placed above partial interests and viewpoints. It is in Christ that the love of God and the sublime dignity of man have been fully revealed to us. May Jesus be the "cornerstone" (cf. *Eph* 2:20) of your life and of the new civilization you are called to build in a spirit of generous solidarity and sharing. No authentic human growth in peace and justice, in truth and freedom, can be achieved without the presence of Christ and his salvific power. The building of a civilization of love requires strong and persevering characters, ready for self-sacrifice and anxious to open up new paths of human coexistence by

overcoming divisions and the various forms of materialism. This is a responsibility of the young people of today who will be the men and women of tomorrow, at the dawn of the third Christian millennium.⁴ In joyful anticipation of our meeting, I urge you all to undergo a deep and meditated spiritual preparation which may increase the ecclesial impetus of this World Day. Start out on the road! May your journey be marked by prayer, study, dialogue and the desire for conversion and a better life. Go forward united with each other in your parishes and Christian communities, in your associations and apostolic movements. May yours be an attitude of acceptance and hope, in harmony with the period of Advent we are beginning! The liturgy of this first Sunday reminds us, in the words of St Paul, that "the time has come" and exhorts us to "give up all the things we prefer to do under cover of the dark" and to "arm ourselves in the Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. *Rom* 13:11-14). I send my affectionate and cordial greetings to all the young people of the world. I do so quite particularly to the young people of Argentina. I have followed with great interest your annual pilgrimages to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Luján and the National Youth Meeting held in Córdoba last year, as well as the "youth option" on which the overall pastoral ministry of the Argentine Episcopate has for years been concentrated. Since my first visit to your country in 1982, so marked by suffering and hope, I have been familiar with your commitment to the building of peace in justice and truth. And through all this, I know that you are contributing with enthusiasm to the preparation of the World Day in Buenos Aires; that you will be present with the Pope at this meeting; and that you will be able to welcome with generous hospitality and shared friendship those young people from other countries who wish to participate in this celebration by pledging themselves to Christ, to the Church and to the new civilization of truth and love. I urge all young men and women throughout the world to celebrate the next World Day of Youth on Palm Sunday 1987 with particular intensity and hope. And I entrust its preparation and its fruits to Mary, the young Virgin of Nazareth, the humble servant of the Lord who believed in the love of the Father and gave us Christ, "our Peace" (cf. *Eph* 2:14). Dear young people, my friends: be witnesses to the love of God, sowers of hope and builders of peace. In the name of the Lord Jesus, I bless you with all my affection. *From the Vatican, 30 November 1986, First Sunday of Advent.* **IOANNES PAULUS PP. II**